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THE RIGHT TO BE SEXY *vs.* THE RIGHT TO BE SAGGY

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD metroVIEWS

Your essential daily news | THURSDAY, APRIL 7, 2016

High 6°C/Low -3°C Scattered showers

Urban planning icon got it right, to T.O.'s benefit

THEORY

Ideas in Jane Jacobs' 1961 book hold true today, research finds

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

If Jane Jacobs was alive today, she could say "I told you so."

A group of Italian researchers have given the urban planning icon a big present ahead of what would have been her 100th birthday on May 4: They've proven her theories correct.

In her seminal 1961 book, The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jacobs proposed four ingredients for vibrant, attractive cities: Mixed land uses, small blocks, diverse buildings in terms of age and form, and sufficient population density.

The ideas became a fixture of urban planning policies in cities like Toronto, where she lived from 1968 until her death in 2006. However, her work has also been criticized for lacking empirical evidence to back up her claims.

Not anymore. University of Trento professor Marco De Nadai and his colleagues have used a combination of planning and smartphone data to show Jacobs' theories hold true for Italy's largest cities.

The researchers analyzed six cities, including Rome and Florence, and found neighbourhoods that conformed to Jacobs' ideals had higher levels of mobile phone activity, which they took as a proxy for "urban vitality."

The areas have dense concentrations of office workers, urban spaces like coffee shops and cafés, small streets and historical buildings, the study concludes.

Jane's Walk Toronto director Denise Pinto said it was "a beautiful coincidence" that De Nadai's research was published so close to Jacobs' centenary in May.

"When Jane wrote about her observations of the street, she was working from her own opinions and experiences. We often don't look at those as rigorous, but we should. The way people experience their cities is important," she said. "It comes down to how we all co-exist in this messy system of the city."

The impacts of Jacobs' policies are still evident in downtown Toronto, and Pinto suggested it's time to apply the same thinking to the city's suburbs — where streets are predominately designed around the car. "We're trying to understand what it would look like to retrofit suburbia to incorporate more of Jane's principles," she said.

Jane Jacobs. COURTESY LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

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Snowden says Panama Papers case highlights 'role of the whistleblower in free society.' **Canada**

Drake's identical pals identified

POLSON PIER INCIDENT

Swedish twins posted photos on Instagram with rapper

One mystery surrounding Drake's allegedly charged-up confrontation with amateur photographers appears to have been solved: the identity of his identically dressed female friends.

The two women who were riding with Drake and a friend in a luxury helicopter that landed at Polson Pier on Monday night have been widely identified as Swedish models, writers and fashion entrepreneurs Elizabeth and Victoria Lejonhjärta.

The twins posted a picture of the Toronto skyline from roughly the same angle as the Polson Pier on their Instagram page the night of the incident.

On Tuesday evening, the twins were photographed courtside at the Raptors game wearing matching pink limited-edition October's Very Own Roots jackets.

On their website, the Lejonhjärtas describe themselves as "writers, poets, models and insta-jedis" who are "mesmerizing the galaxy" with their social-media presence.

In a December interview with i-D, the twins said they were 25 and grew up in a region of northern Sweden called Norrbotten.

They already have a rich history with the 29-year-old rapper.

In December, the sisters posted a picture on Instagram of a grinning Drake leaning into one of their shoulders with the caption: "That time we got some Canadian dude drunk and had him get a tattoo of our name." L.A. tattoo-artist-to-the-stars Dr. Woo subsequently shared a photo of Drake's ink, a richly animated lion framed by the words "Oktober Lejonhjärta." (The phrase translates to "October Lionheart.")

On Monday, city employee Matt Small says he was snapping pictures of a vibrant sunset when Drake's helicopter landed nearby. After Small, 28, took a few pictures of Drake and his friends leaving the aircraft, an argument ensued during which Drake climbed a six-foot fence to demand Small delete the photos, according to Small and Michael Massie, who was also on Polson Pier that night. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Left: Drake was photographed on Monday at Toronto's Polson Pier getting out of a luxury helicopter, along with a pair of identically dressed women. MATT SMALL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE
Above: an Instagram post appearing to show Elizabeth and Victoria Lejonhjärta with rapper Drake. INSTAGRAM/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Michal Kapral
CHRISTINE SPINGOLA/CANADA RUNNING SERIES

HALF MARATHON

City home to the fastest 'joggler': Guinness World Records

Gilbert Ngabo
Metro | Toronto

It's official.

Toronto is home to the fastest half marathon joggler in the world.

Michal Kapral got the word Monday from Guinness World Records that the one-hour and 20 minutes it took him to complete the 2014 Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront half marathon while juggling three balls set a new bar.

NEXT CHALLENGE

Michal Kapral would love to take on the CN Tower stair climb while juggling. "That'd be a really tough one I think," he said.

As far as Kapral is concerned, it's just the first formal recognition of his many successes.

He's pretty sure he's been unofficially setting and breaking records since picking up jogging and juggling many years ago.

"I've always liked to try and do all sorts of things while running," Kapral said, noting he once ran a full marathon while pushing his daughter in a stroller.

But, he considers joggling "the best sport almost no one has heard of."

Running, he said, is an "addiction" that's proven impossible to shake.

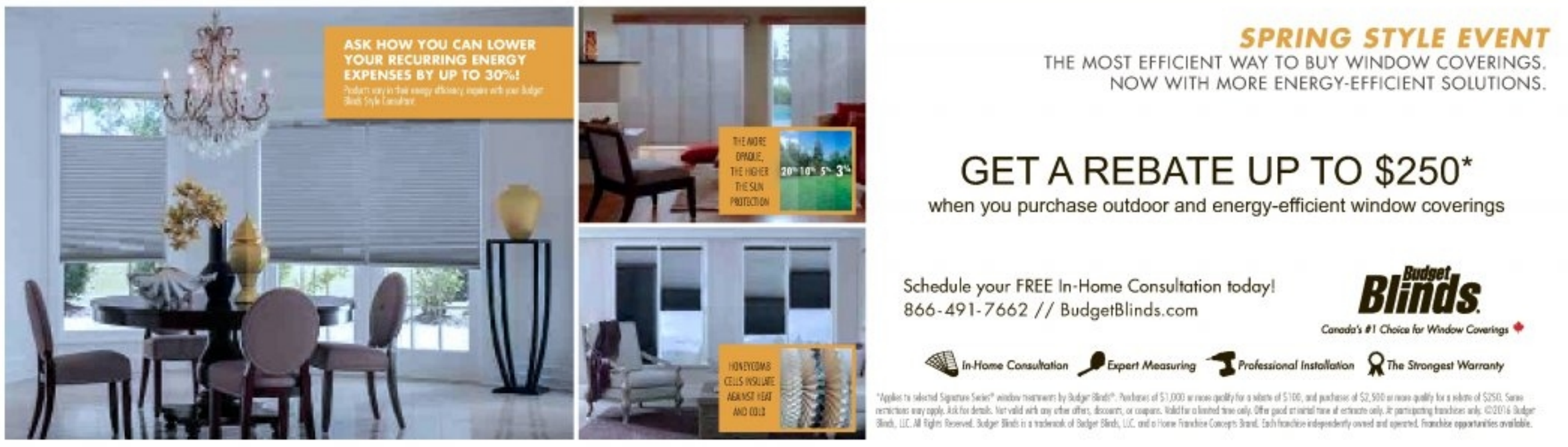
Joggling, meanwhile, can be seen as a metaphor for how we lead our lives.

"We're all running our life marathon," Kapral said. "If you drop a ball, you've got to pick it up and keep going."

In October, Kapral plans to compete against jogglers from around the world during a marathon in Chicago.

It shouldn't prove too much of an issue since he's already mastered the strategy.

"You've just got to get into the zone," he said. "If you overthink it, you quickly drop the ball."



Learning from history

RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Survivor shares his story with students

Jessica Smith Cross
Metro | Toronto

Students in Ontario schools are taught about the Holocaust. But, every genocide in human history is different. Each holds unique lessons for young people — and that's why Emery Rutagonya tells his story.

Rutagonya, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, has told his story at more than 25 Ontario schools and to thousands of people around the world. He's co-founder of the Toronto-based Rwanda Survivors Foundation, which is working to remember those who died, empower survivors and create awareness about human rights violations.

"Genocides all have something in common — they're all forms of extreme bullying and prejudice that lead to the systematic extermination of one group," Rutagonya said. "But each genocide has historically something different. In the case of the genocide in Rwanda, it's important that it happened in Africa and it's still very recent."

The Rwanda genocide saw an estimated 800,000 people killed between April 7 and July 1994. Led by the country's political elite, as much as 70 per cent of the Tutsi population died in the slayings.

Rutagonya was an 18-year-old student when the violence broke out. Daily survival became a fight and left him on the run, hiding in an attic at one point and seeking shelter in a church. Eventually, he was rescued. But, by the time the killings stopped, 29 members of his family and many of his friends were dead. As he explains it: "Everybody was killed, or turned a killer."

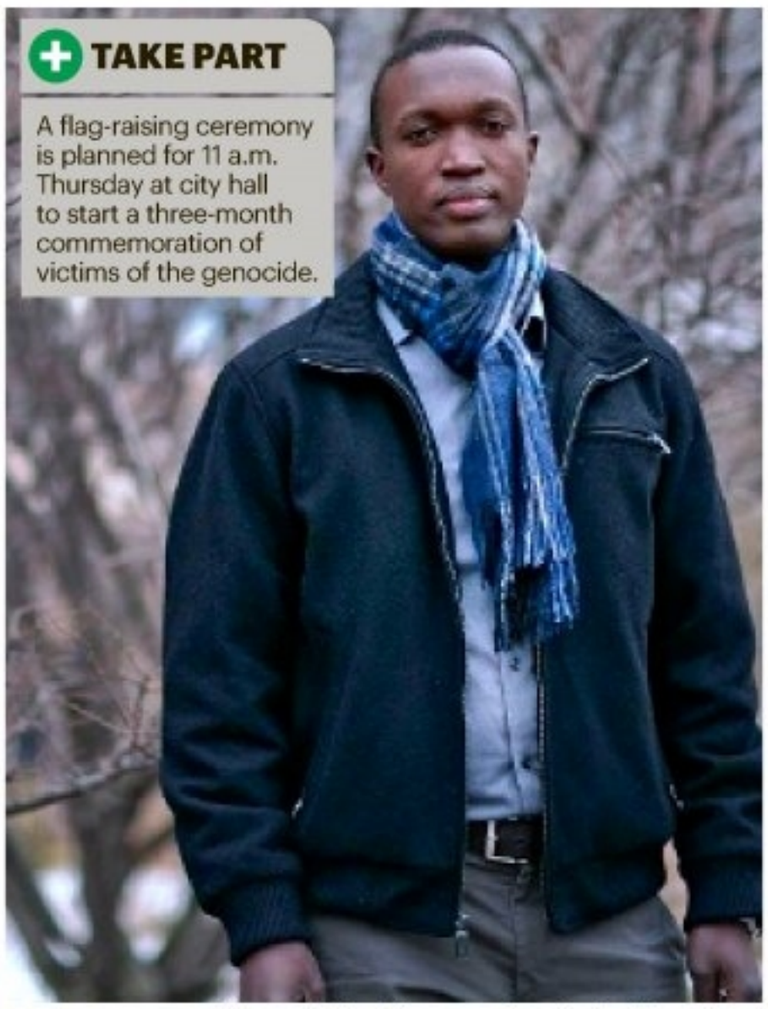
The story he tells students, however, is always about more than fleeing violence. It's about resilience and the difficulty he faced in the years that followed.

"I tell them how it was hard to go back to school, how it was hard to accept life again," he said.

And, at 40 years old, Rutagonya's age alone helps his message resonate. "They learn that if it happened recently, it can happen again."

TAKE PART

A flag-raising ceremony is planned for 11 a.m. Thursday at city hall to start a three-month commemoration of victims of the genocide.



Emery Rutagonya is hopeful that his story of survival will teach tolerance, acceptance and cultural understanding. LIZ BEDDALL/METRO

RIDE-SHARING

City to pitch separate rules for Uber, taxis

Cabbies and UberX drivers would not, despite taxi industry demands, face exactly the same regulations under a long-awaited plan to be released by city staff Thursday, says Toronto Mayor John Tory.

"The notion that the regulations were ever going to be exactly the same — you are dealing with two different businesses," Tory said Wednesday from San Francisco, about to head to Asia on a trade trip. "Our goal is to provide equitable rules for the two parts of the industry and choice for the customers."

Councillor Jim Karygiannis, city council's most outspoken Uber critic and taxi defender, said he saw the report Wednesday and is not satisfied. He refused to discuss specifics but said, "It's disheartening what I've seen."

Taxi industry leaders are adamant there is one business — taxis, whether dispatched by an app or not — and are certain to be unhappy with the proposed two-tier rules. Whether Uber likes what it sees depends on details — the company approves of specialized rules in Edmonton, but rejects those approved by Calgary's council.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

CRIME

Doctor charged in fentanyl trafficking investigation

A Toronto doctor is among seven people facing charges after York Regional Police dismantled a fentanyl trafficking ring following a six-month investigation.

Police allege Dr. George Otto and Ms. Shereen El Azrak, who run a family practice in Toronto, were working with street-level dealers to distribute and obtain fentanyl patches.

These patches were sold for a street value of $400 to $500 each.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid 100 times stronger than morphine. A rising number of deaths have been attributed to the illicit use of the drug. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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6 MEMORABLE VISITS BY THE ROYALS

The royal family knows a thing or two about Toronto. Prince Harry will be in town on May 2 to launch a countdown for the Invictus Games, coming to the city in September 2017. His visit won't, of course, be Toronto's first brush with royalty.

Liz Beddall
Metro | Toronto

1939: Queen Elizabeth and King George VI visited disabled war veterans at Christie Hospital.

1989: Queen Elizabeth came back exactly 50 years later, meeting here with people at Queen's Park.

1991: Princess Diana brought thousands onto the streets during her visit. Prince Harry was along for the ride.

2009: Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, and Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, dropped by the Royal Winter Agricultural Fair.

2010: Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, headed to Woodbine Racetrack for the 151st running of the Queen's Plate Stakes.

2012: Prince Charles picked up some DJ skills when he visited Toronto as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee tour of Canada.

MISSISSAUGA

'It's time for our city to control its own destiny,' says Crombie

The mayor of Canada's sixth-largest city, one of the largest suburbs in North America, says it's time for Mississauga to get out of Peel Region and stand on its own two feet.

"Me and the council I'm a part of believe it's time for our city to control its own destiny," Bonnie Crombie told Torstar News Service Wednesday, shortly after the city's council voted for an independent study to determine if the city should secede from the region.

The move reignites an issue brought up numerous times by former mayor Hazel McCallion. The regional government system, created by former Ontario premier Bill Davis in 1974, was meant to help smaller municipalities with a variety of costly services and infrastructure needs, as they entered into rapid growth periods that would have been difficult to sustain using their own tax base.

Mississauga Mayor Bonnie Crombie TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

But with about 750,000 residents, Mississauga officials have long argued that it is time to stand on its own. That would mean Peel's other two municipalities, Brampton and Caledon, would be left without the largest source of tax revenue in the region.

Mississauga contributes "two-thirds of the tax base (for the regional government)," Crombie said. "Caledon has 60,000 residents. Our smallest wards have more than 60,000 residents. It's an inequity."

In two-tier regional governments, municipalities only contribute taxes to the region for the services provided at that level, such as policing. But services such as parks, Mississauga collects its own taxes. Seceding would bring everything under one roof, controlled by one council. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

IN BRIEF

Four charged in staged car accident investigation

Four people are facing charges after allegedly staging a car accident and filing false insurance claims.

York Regional Police have charged Fatin Elias, Jourjeet Shahara, Samid Shahara and Salam Shahara of Toronto.

Each faces six charges including conspiracy to commit an indictable offence and obstructing police. THE CANADIAN PRESS

G20 summit detainees win right to file class-action

More than 1,000 people detained during the chaotic G20 summit almost six years ago won the right Wednesday to go the class-action route in lawsuits against police and others. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Police say this is the vehicle involved in the crash. It's a 2012 model and likely has front-end damage. COURTESY TORONTO POLICE

TORONTO'S DEADLY STREETS

Car in hit-and-run hidden, police say

A car involved in a fatal hit-and-run is being harboured by people who know the alleged driver, police say.

Saeed Maravvej Torbati was charged Monday with failure to stop at the scene of a fatal accident, four days after a 56-year-old woman was hit while walking near Markham and Nashdene roads.

Torbati turned himself in after police released images of him and the black Mercedes Benz believed to have been involved in the crash.

Saeed Maravvej Torbati. COURTESY TORONTO POLICE

The car, however, has not been found.

"Anyone who may be aiding the accused by withholding the car from police may face charges," police said in a statement released Wednesday. "Charges could include being an accessory after the fact and obstruction of justice."

Torbati lives in Ottawa but frequently travels to Toronto on business, a friend told Metro earlier this week.

The 25-year-old is founder of Ontario Stars, a direct marketing company that sells "eco-friendly" home products like heaters and air filters, according to his LinkedIn page.

METRO

Mainstreet Research's latest poll offers a snapshot of how Torontonians feel about everything from ranked ballots to Internet voting and whether we have enough – or too many – councillors.

1 RANKED BALLOT VOTING

Approve: 59%
Disapprove: 29%

2 INTERNET VOTING

Security: 54% (+4%)
Approval: 59% (+4%)

3 SIZE OF CITY COUNCIL

Just Right 43%
Too Many Councillors 48%

Mainstreet surveyed a random sample of 2,062 Torontonians. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.16 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

T.O. residents favour ranked ballots: Poll

CITY HALL

Councillors show no sign of reversing rejection

Luke Simcoe
Metro | Toronto

Toronto councillors are standing firm in their opposition to ranked ballots, despite new data showing it's popular with voters.

In fact, more than half — 59 per cent — of Torontonians are in favour of using ranked ballots in municipal elections, according to a poll released Wednesday by Mainstreet Research.

City council voted 25–18 against the idea last October and has shown no sign of reversing course since the province announced Monday it would allow municipalities to use ranked ballots in future elections.

"The ward boundary review process has the potential to displace councillors from their pre-existing constituencies. Adding in ranked ballots may make some councillors very nervous about their chances for re-election," said Mainstreet president Quito Maggi.

Metro reached out to the 25 councillors who voted against electoral reform to ask if the poll — coupled with the province's endorsement — could make them change their minds.

Only five — councillors Gary Crawford, Jaye Robinson, John Campbell, Jim Karygiannis and Stephen Holyday — responded.

Campbell, Karygiannis and Holyday said they still prefer the existing "first past the post" system. Robinson said she voted against ranked ballots "in error" when it was on the council floor. But, she still has concerns the ballots make elections too complicated.

Holyday said he supports ranked ballots, but voted against them in the fall because he believes the switch should only be made after a referendum.

There's never been a public referendum in amalgamated Toronto, and council has made significant electoral changes, including moving to a four-year term, without directly consulting the public.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

The Vanier Centre for Women (VCW) is seeking up to six part-time members to serve on the local Community Advisory Board.

Applicants should reside in the City of Milton and surrounding area or in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), with recognized and responsible community involvement in areas such as social services, the criminal justice system and/or other service to the community.

The Community Advisory Board acts in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and provides advice on all aspects of VCW operations. Members visit the VCW on a regular basis and meet monthly as a board. Members are appointed for a term of up to three years, subject to renewal.

Additional information can be found on the Public Appointments Secretariat (PAS) website **www.ontario.ca/publicappointments.**

To apply by email, fax, mail or hand delivery, a downloadable application form is available from the PAS website.

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Snowden praises leaker

DEMOCRACY

Panama Papers show a 'vital' need for more whistleblowers

Matt Kieltyka
Metro | Vancouver

The need for whistleblowers is greater than ever following the release of the Panama Papers, Edward Snowden told a Vancouver audience Tuesday evening.

The National Security Agency whistleblower appeared via web link at Queen Elizabeth Theatre for a Simon Fraser University Public Square forum on big data, moderated by CBC journalist Laura Lynch.

Inevitably, Snowden — who exposed mass surveillance by the United States government and its allies in 2013 and who is currently living in Russia for fear of arrest — was asked about the release of the Panama Papers this week.

Edward Snowden speaks to CBC journalist Laura Lynch via web-link during a Simon Fraser University Public Square forum on big data in Vancouver on Tuesday. SCREENGRAB

The papers, reportedly the biggest data leak in history, contain the private database of law firm Mossack Fonseca and reveals how offshore tax havens are used by companies and individuals, including some world leaders, to avoid billions of dollars in taxes.

"We have found that countries where we might have suspected this kind of corruption — such as China, Ukraine and Russia — were not alone," said Snowden. "This reveals that one of the founding premises of democracy, which is that one law applies equally to both the powerful and the powerless, is beginning to change. And it happens without our knowledge, our awareness and without our consent.

"The most privileged and the most powerful members of society are operating under a different set of rules that exempt them from not only the same laws to which we are held, not only the same standards of behaviours to which we are held, but they don't even pay the same taxes that we do."

WITH FILES FROM TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

PM urges crackdown

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Wednesday the international community has to work together to make global finance more transparent to prevent the sort of inequality highlighted by the so-called Panama Papers scandal.

Otherwise, rich investors will simply "hop" around to favourable jurisdictions where they can avoid paying tax, Trudeau said.

"The level of awareness that citizens of the world are beginning to take in regards to tax avoidance and evasion is a good thing," Trudeau said. "But it's certainly something that we will be working on together as a community of nations."

Trudeau was asked about the matter in Montreal, where the annual general meeting of the Royal Bank of Canada — the only Canadian banked linked to the data leak — was also taking place Wednesday. Media reports say the bank used Mossack Fonseca, a Panamanian law firm at the centre of the data leak, to set up more than 370 shell companies.

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Release name of bank: Critics

FINTRAC

$1.1M fine issued, but agency won't name names

Canada's terrorism and money-laundering watchdog announced Tuesday that has issued a $1.1-million fine against an unknown financial institution for failing to report a suspicious transaction and various other infractions. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Why is the federal anti-money-laundering agency tight-lipped about the name of the first Canadian bank found to violate its regulations, but publicly shaming smaller players?

That's what a wide-ranging group of critics want to know about the first-ever penalty against a bank by the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre of Canada.

The terrorism and money-laundering watchdog, known as Fintrac, announced Tuesday that it has issued a $1.1-million fine against an undisclosed financial institution for failing to report a suspicious transaction and various other infractions.

"Our criminal and administrative law regime is based on disclosure of wrongdoing not on secrecy of wrongdoing," said Christine Duhaime, a lawyer who specializes in anti-money-laundering law.

"Joe Average who is fined for any administrative infraction is not afforded secrecy in this way and the rules should apply to all Canadians, legal and natural personals, equally."

Fintrac said Tuesday's announcement is meant to deter others from failing to report.

But the bank's name was not added to a list of violators published on the agency's website. However, the home page shows the name of many smaller companies.

Fintrac collects millions of pieces of data from 31,000 businesses every year and analyzes them for suspicious activity. Those businesses are legally required to report certain financial activities — anything from cash transactions of more than $10,000 to a disguised customer.

The centre has legal power to use its discretion on whether to publicly name companies it has fined. The recent unnamed financial institution isn't the only case where it has taken exception — the companies involved in 34 of the 74 monetary penalties the agency has levied since 2008 have not been disclosed, said spokesman Darren Gibb.

In the case of the bank, the agency decided it was in the public interest to publish the details of the penalty to "send a strong message of deterrence" in a timely manner rather than name the institution after a potentially lengthy appeal process. The financial institution has already paid the $1.1-million penalty.

Michael Baumbach is director of Toronto-based Diamond Exchange Toronto Inc. which was fined $12,750 and named by Fintrac in March. He says the agency is unfairly punishing smaller firms like his jewelry business, which is trying hard to comply, while letting bigger players off the hook.

He believes the bank's name was kept secret because it has resources at its disposal to give Fintrac a legal headache. Meanwhile, he feels powerless when trying to get answers about why it fined his company, which now faces bankruptcy over what he says is an unjust fine.

The first-ever Canadian bank penalty has come to light amid heightened awareness about money laundering in the wake of the so-called Panama Papers, which implicate numerous Canadians in dubious banking practices around the world.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

TECHNOLOGY

Making a machine to mine moon and Mars

A northern Ontario company is being awarded a Canadian Space Agency contract to work on a multi-purpose device that's designed for future mining on the moon and Mars.

Deltion Innovations Ltd. of Capreol will develop the combination drill and rotary multi-use tool, which it describes as a space-age Swiss Army knife.

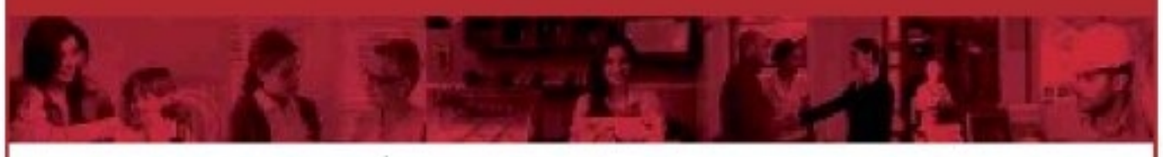
The device, which would be installed on the end of a robotic arm, is designed to drill into rock and other materials to capture a variety of samples.

It would also be used in robotic construction, maintenance and repair tasks.

Deltion CEO Dale Boucher says in a news release the project continues his company's "unique heritage" of space mining technology developments.

The awarding of the $700,000 contract was to be officially announced at a news conference in Capreol and Deltion is subcontracting with two other Ontario firms— Neptec Design Group of Kanata and Atlas Copco of North Bay. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Seneca



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Donald Trump's lead now damaged

U.S. ELECTION

Wisconsin dealt blow to front-runner's campaign

Republican Donald Trump emerged from the Wisconsin primaries as a damaged front-runner following a crushing primary loss to rival Ted Cruz, deepening questions about the billionaire businessman's presidential qualifications and pushing the Republican Party toward a rare contested convention nomination fight.

Democrat Bernie Sanders also scored a sweeping victory Tuesday giving him fresh incentive to keep challenging Hillary Clinton. But Sanders still lags behind Clinton in the all-important delegate count.

Both parties now turn their sights toward New York, which offers a massive delegate prize in its April 19 contests. It marks a homecoming of sorts for several candidates, with Trump, Clinton and Sanders all boasting roots in the state.

In the Republican primary system, candidates vie in each state to win delegates, who then vote for the nominee at party conventions over the summer. If no candidate wins an outright majority in the first vote of the convention, most delegates are free to change their allegiance, so candidates would have to compete to win their support.

Cruz has stepped forward as the candidate best positioned to block Trump in the Republican race, though it would likely take a convention battle to accomplish that goal. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Donald Trump speaks during a campaign rally Wednesday.
JULIE JACOBSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

2016: a space odyssey

NASA's Terra satellite has been orbiting Earth every day since 1999. Here are three awe-inspiring images it has captured. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The Andes
The Andes along the Chile-Bolivia border.

China
Rivers and sediment interact to create an "alluvial fan" between the mountain ranges that form the southern border of China's Taklamakan Desert.

Nunavut
Glaciers and ice on Ellesmere Island.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook rearranging buttons to highlight video

Facebook is rearranging the notification panel on its mobile apps in an effort to broaden the audience creating, watching and reacting to live video on its social network.

The shift announced Wednesday is part of Facebook's effort to turn its live video feature into a marquee attraction as more people use their smartphones to record and share snippets of their lives.

Initially introduced as a tool for celebrities eight months ago, Facebook's live video option is now available in 60 countries.

To help promote it, Facebook is moving the button for its Messenger service so that the new video option can be highlighted on the notification panel.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

metro VIEWS
Your essential daily news
Thursday, April 7, 2016

CHANTAL HÉBERT ON THE NDP'S LEADERSHIP CRISIS

In politics, half of the battle often amounts to staying alive to fight another day and, by all indications, Mulcair would be happy to settle for what could be no more than a reprieve.

As the New Democrats prepare to pronounce on Thomas Mulcair's leadership, here is a prediction: Regardless of how the NDP leader scores on confidence vote Sunday, there will be little or no cause for celebration at the party's gathering in Edmonton.

One way or another, most of the delegates will leave the convention with the sense that the leadership issue remains unresolved, and their party is unmoored in the federal universe. There will be no definitive resolution to what ails the NDP this weekend.

Most New Democrats will not really be asking themselves whether they want Mulcair to lead them in another election on Sunday.

If that were really the question put to the convention, the answer would almost certainly be negative or, at least, not positive enough for Mulcair to stay on.

In the five months since the federal election, few backers have emerged for his contention that he will do better next time. The fact that the party will have another shot at showing him the door before the next campaign has surfaced as a more compelling argument for postponing a leadership change.

That's basically the case laid out by — among others — Unifor's president Jerry Dias. The leader of Canada's largest private sector union argues the decision as to who will lead the party in 2019 should be based on what Mulcair achieves between now and the next time his leadership comes up for review in two years.

If the NDP leader survives the weekend it will be, in no small part, on the basis of that logic.

If, on the other hand, his convention support falls short, the many New Democrats who are out to punish him for a disappointing campaign will feel vindicated, but for how long?

Predictably, some of the more aggressive promoters of a leadership change are MPs who lost their seats last fall. Some of them also happen to have been at the table when the campaign strategy — including the party's lacklustre platform — was agreed upon.

For all the talk of poor choices and uninspiring execution, there is no evidence that a more aggressively left-wing approach would have delivered more seats last fall. Moreover, at this juncture, those who believe the party has lost its way in a self-defeating rush to the centre lack a unifying figure to make the case for their conclusions.

To sum up: The NDP does have a leadership crisis on its hands. The only question is whether enough delegates will agree to keep a lid on the issue this weekend. But the larger crisis is one of relevance and it is one that Mulcair's efforts over the past few months have only highlighted.

Much like his campaign strategy, the post-election path he has so far sketched out is based on the presumption that Justin Trudeau's government will so underwhelm progressive voters that they will rediscover the virtues of a moderate NDP and — by the same token — the merits of a ready-for-prime-time leader in 2019.

In politics, half of the battle often amounts to staying alive to fight another day and, by all indications, Mulcair would be happy to settle for what could be no more than a reprieve. After all, beggars can't be choosers.

The New Democrats are meeting on the heels of a resounding defeat in Saskatchewan; at a time when the Manitoba NDP is facing extra-long odds in the quest for a fifth mandate, and with the federal party in the basement of voting intentions

Mulcair can reasonably hope the context will be more favourable to his leadership in a couple of years.

But there is another scenario that may make it worth their while for the New Democrats who absolutely cannot fathom going into the next election with the current leader to keep their powder dry and it's Trudeau's promise of electoral reform.

The advent of a more proportional voting system in time for the next election could go a long way to shift the balance between the NDP's social-democratic ideals and the quest for government in favour of the former. It could also render the rationale for sticking with a middle-of-the-road leader such as Mulcair redundant.

Chantal Hébert is a national affairs writer. Her column appears in Metro every Thursday.

THE MICROTREND: Femininity consultants

Post-Caitlyn Jenner, trans rights are at the forefront of the fight for equality. For the movement, there are political and economic battles to be fought and entrenched stereotypes to erase. But for individual trans people, there's an equally important struggle: figuring out how to present themselves to an often hostile world. Of course, where there's a need, there's a business opportunity. Hence the inchoate cottage industry of femininity consultants such as Monica Prata, a New York woman (cisgendered) whose company, Nouveau She, provides clients at various stages of transition with advice in makeup, comportment and wardrobe. "Our objective ... is not to create a caricature of femininity but rather to illuminate your beauty within," says Nouveau She's website. SOURCE: VICE; IMAGE: THE CANADIAN PRESS

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD

metroview

Public changerooms: Our secret realm of body positivity

There's Kim Kardashian nude — all pouty and "empowered" on social media.

And then there's changeroom nude.

Where Kim is never short of vapid, Hallmark-inspired defences of nude selfies and her right to "be allowed to be sexy," in the changeroom at the downtown Jewish Community Centre, nudity is allowed to be saggy.

All day long, women file in and out, coming in clothed, exiting clothed. In between? They're naked. And not for self-promotion purposes.

A public changeroom is the anti-porn, the pro-reality. It's not that these average, assorted bodies can't be sensual, but they aren't naked for sex, or even sexiness. And in our culture, that is refreshing. No one is stopping to snap selfies tagged "#liberated." They're busy applying lotion.

Some women are tall and thin, or short and round, small breasts, large ones, slumped shoulders, knocked knees, loose skin, flat bottoms. Chatting in various states of dress and undress, calloused feet on tile floors, blow-drying their hair with a small towel over their bare shoulders to catch the wet drips.

They get dressed in helter-skelter fashion while passing by mirrors for makeup and hair primping.

The clientele skews older, which is enlightening for a young(er) woman. This is your future, their bodies announce, and no amount of #goals will save you from #time.

This is an oasis from beauty norms, even household norms (how many adult children are openly nude with their parents?). I've even seen a naked woman in the hot tub sing to herself, something bluesy.

As a teenager, I hated the flagrant disrobing. I used the private stalls, cringing at even my own mother or sister's bare bodies slipping in and out of swimsuits. Mortified most of all by the shower.

I grew into public nudity as I grew out of self-consciousness. Perhaps changerooms, then, are good barometers for how comfortable you are in your skin. But they're also an opportunity to see how comfortable others are. Others who aren't a Kardashian. Others who probably don't prize looking hot quite so much, and who take interest in other measurements.

It's not syrupy self-love on display, only self-acceptance.

Undoubtedly, most women could criticize their bodies, if asked to. But who would bother? And what's the point? You've already dragged yourself here for some kind of fitness effort, and your limbs are working to whatever degree, and you're not thinking about the size of your tits while you strap on a bra. Blessedly, neither is anyone else.

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NEW GIG
Lena Dunham and Jenni Konner, the brains behind Girls and Lenny, will oversee a line of books for Random House

Candy's history isn't too sweet

Author Susan Benjamin owns several historic candy shops called True Treats Candy. CONTRIBUTED

NEW BOOK

Author looks at the origins of treats

Susan Benjamin owns stores in Maryland and West Virginia called True Treats Candy that specialize in historical candy products, including treats created by Aboriginal Peoples.

She has now written a history of candy, Sweet as Sin: The Unwrapped Story of How Candy Became America's Favorite Pleasure.

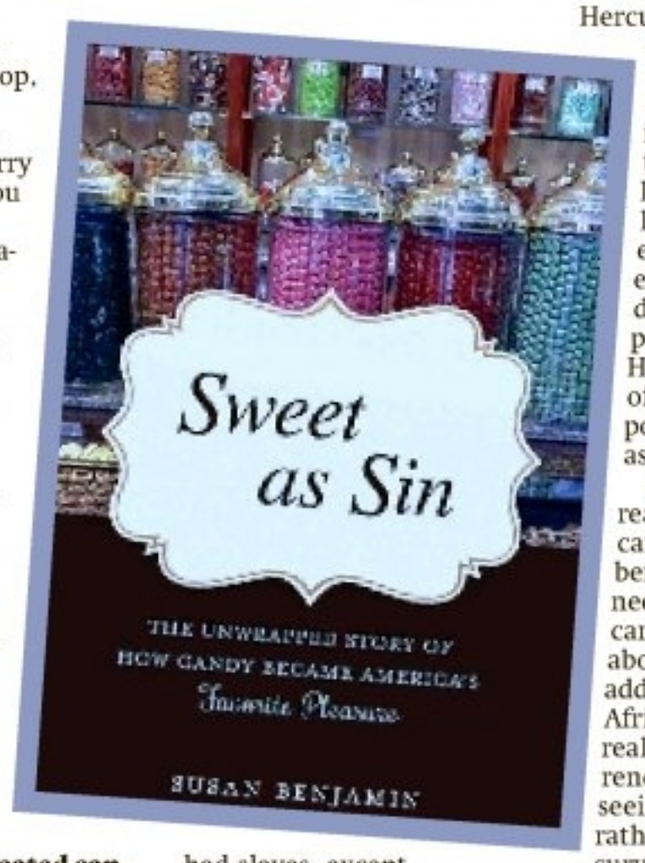
This conversation about her new book has been edited for length.

The idea of candy in North America really started with indigenous fruit — cranberries and blueberries, for example. It's surprising to find that peaches weren't natural to this continent and they changed the way people ate.

When you go through the supermarket, there is very little that exists as it originally was. You have to remember the honeybee didn't get to North America until 1622. The peach came here in the 1500s with the explorers. They flourished, in part, because native Americans created orchards. Fruits that were indigenous to North America, the strawberry and the blueberry, were changed by the European-Americans trying to create a more salable commodity.

> **When you talk about candy you have to address the lives of the African Americans. It is really dire and so horrendous.** Susan Benjamin

We sell, in our historic candy shop, fruit from the Ojibwa tribe, the highbush blueberry and cranberry. You can really taste the difference. Native Americans used all parts of the corn and one good example is corn syrup, and that was used long before the Europeans came. The other corn product would be the corn cob. We sell corn-cob jelly in our shop. Native people would take various parts of the corn and use it as candy.



You write about the chefs who created candied treats for their employers, but your description of George Washington suggests he was a terrible boss, especially to his poor chef Hercules!

Washington was considered relatively good to his slaves. Most of the founding fathers had slaves, except for John Adams. Hercules is an amazing example because he defeated the system by escaping and staying escaped.

When George Washington lived in Philadelphia, which allowed slaves to become free after living in Pennsylvania for at least six months, he would often send his slaves back to Mount Vernon in Virginia, which was a state that had the largest number of slaves in the early United States. Hercules wanted to be his own man. Word got around to George Washington that Hercules wanted to be free, so he sent him back to Virginia and had him do arduous work in the fields. He did that to break Hercules' spirit so Hercules wouldn't think of escaping. Hercules did escape, but Washington did everything in his power to get him back. He posted notices; he offered Hercules the opportunity to come back as a free man.

I believe the main reason for slavery was cane sugar. Huge numbers of workers were needed to produce the cane. So when you talk about candy you have to address the lives of the African Americans. It is really so dire and so horrendous, and I started seeing them as survivors rather than victims. They survived these unbearable circumstances. It made me see my nation in a different way, and that many of these people were unsung inventors in the world of sugar and they need to be honoured and celebrated and admired.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Telling the tale of a gay, Yiddish-speaking parrot

YIDDISH FOR PIRATES

Gary Barwin mixes identity and adventure in new book

Sue Carter
For Metro Canada

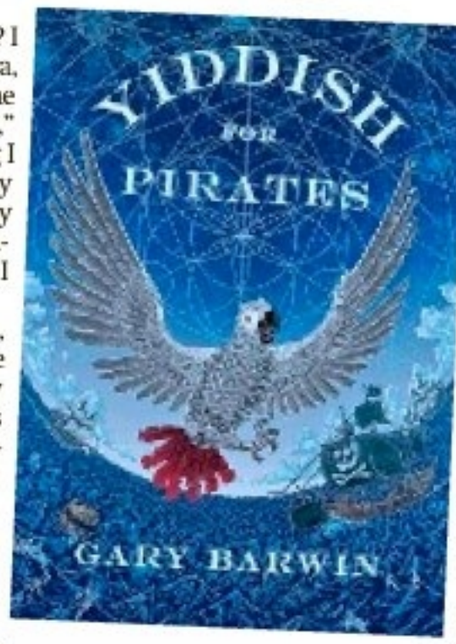
Gary Barwin was working on the manuscript for his novel Yiddish for Pirates one day when his daughter came home from school, and caught him having a chuckle. "Dad, you're laughing at your own jokes again."

It's obvious that the Hamilton, Ont., author enjoyed writing this humorous, pun-laden twist on the classic adventure story, which at its heart deals with the very serious issues of religious persecution and identity — as told by Aaron, a 500-year-old, immortal, gay, Yiddish-speaking parrot.

"I was thinking this is a pirate story; who is the perfect narrator, who is there all the time? I was thinking of a GoPro camera, he's sitting on the shoulders the whole time and he observes," says Barwin. "The other thing I love about parrots is that they are like humans, they can only communicate with the language that they've learned. I feel like that's what I do."

Set in the early 1490s, Yiddish for Pirates tells the story of Moishe, a young boy who joins a ship crew, helps a group of hidden Jews during the Spanish Inquisition to smuggle out forbidden books, falls in love and travels to the New World with Christopher Columbus before becoming a revenge-seeking pirate. Despite Barwin's long resumé as a poet and performer, this is his first novel for adults, released under Random House Canada's prestigious New Face of Fiction program.

Writing Yiddish for Pirates gave Barwin the opportunity to engage deeper with his own religion.



"There's something about being Jewish and Jewish identity and its relationship to language and story that's really captivating to me," he says.

"I had to constantly be open to where the story would take me next. I never believed this when other writers said this before, but it really felt like the characters and the language really took me — I just followed along."

While the book deals with historical tragedies, many of which have jarring similarities to today's world, it does so through dark, ironic humour, a trait he also finds empowering in Judaism. Barwin resisted using puns, but as he progressed, his characters demanded more slang and slapstick (many of which involve various bodily functions).

"Pirates were these word-invention machines. These insults and swashbuckling threats are such a juicy joy to speak," he says.

"That's a component of that in Yiddish as well. People who speak Yiddish love to revel in the Yiddishisms and clever charismatic ways of saying things. It's so fun to riff off of those."

Writing the book also brought back childhood memories of voraciously reading adventure stories and watching pirate movies.

Sue Carter is the editor at Quill & Quire magazine.

RELAUNCH

Clever team behind the Black Panther

Mike Donachie
Metro | Canada

BLACK PANTHER #1
BY: Ta-Nehisi Coates, Brian Stelfreeze and Laura Martin
PUBLISHER: Marvel Comics

Marvel have done a lot of cool things lately, but perhaps the coolest is the relaunch of Black Panther and the choice of its creative team.

With issue one appearing just ahead of the character's much-anticipated appearance in the movie Captain America: Civil War, this new book is a lot deeper than the movie is expected to be.

It's been written by Ta-Nehisi Coates, an extremely clever man who writes about politics and culture for The Atlantic and last year won a National Book Award for Between The World and Me.

With beautiful art by Brian Stelfreeze, this book is itself extremely clever. The Black Panther is, once again, T'Challa, king of mineral rich, high-tech African nation Wakanda.

But in this book Coates asks a good question: what kind of king can you be when you're running around being a superhero with the Avengers? And why would his people accept an absolute monarchy?

It's an entertaining book that's worth picking up for its intelligent storytelling.

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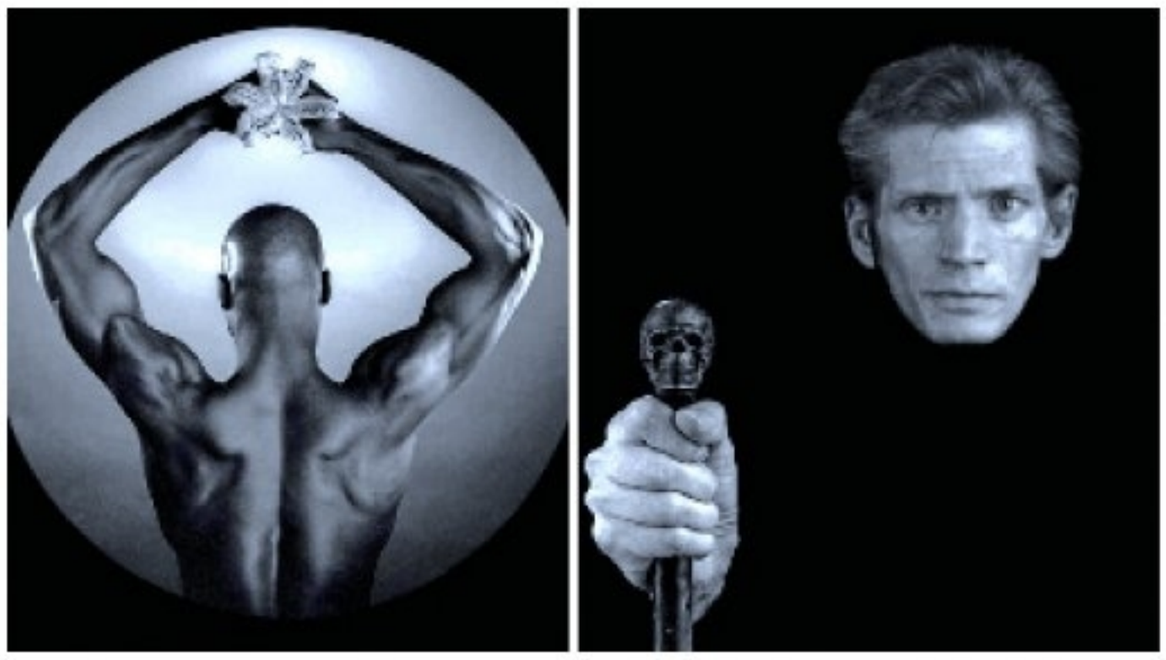

Late artist Robert Mapplethorpe, right, shocked sensibilities with his images of gay sexuality. CONTRIBUTED

JOHANNA SCHNELLER WHAT I'M WATCHING

The photographer who said 'Made you look!'

THE SHOW: Mapplethorpe: Look at the Pictures (HBO)
THE MOMENT: The self-portraits

Halfway through this documentary, the late artist Robert Mapplethorpe — who was both renowned and reviled for photographing images of gay sexuality — tells a journalist the story behind his most controversial self-portrait.

After photographing a graphic sex act, Mapplethorpe recalls, one of its subjects challenged him: "You wouldn't want to be considered somebody who exploits people and isn't able to exploit himself."

So Mapplethorpe put on a vest, chaps, and boots, and (bear with me here) inserted a bullwhip into his anus. He posed with his back to the camera — then turned his head around and levelled his gaze right at us, the viewers.

"Most people would say that's a horrible image of yourself," the journalist remarks.

"No," Mapplethorpe replies. "That's a good one."

The title of this doc is a challenge, and it keeps challenging us throughout — both to see what Mapplethorpe saw, and to understand why he needed us to. Many of the images are squirm-inducing, and the interviewees acknowledge that.

But as Mapplethorpe insists, "Sexuality like I portray it is very much (happening) today. It will take a few years before people realize that," and, "What happens here is indicative of America, finally."

In other words, if many people are doing something, it can't be inherently wrong. Empathy requires understanding, and the first step toward understanding something is to look at it, unblinkingly. In his final self-portrait, Mapplethorpe holds a cane topped with a silver skull. He's dying of AIDS, and he faces that, also without blinking.

Johanna Schneller is a media connoisseur who zeroes in on pop-culture moments. She appears Monday through Thursday.

MUSIC

Janet Jackson tour delayed

Janet Jackson is delaying her "Unbreakable" tour, saying Wednesday that she and her husband are planning their family and that she is under doctor's orders to rest.

The 49-year-old singer announced in a video on her Twitter account Wednesday morning that there has been a "sudden change" to the second leg of her tour, which started in August.

She didn't say she was pregnant with her first child, only that she needed to rest up.

Jackson married Wissam Al Mana in 2012. In the video clip, Jackson thanked her fans for their love and loyalty. She went on to thank her dancers, her band and her crew.

"Once again, thank you to all the fans for your love, your undying love; your loyalty, that means so much to me," Jackson said. "It's been a long journey and you guys have been there each and every step of the way and I really do appreciate that ... I will see you soon."

On Dec. 24, Jackson announced that she was postponing her tour until the spring to have an unspecified surgical procedure. She had been next scheduled to perform in early January in Denver.

Janet Jackson's comment that she's planning her family has fuelled speculation about a possible pregnancy. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

She said no further details on her medical condition would be disclosed. Two weeks later, Jackson announced rescheduled tour dates after she took some time to recover from the surgical procedure.

Jackson said at the time that the North American leg of her "Unbreakable" tour would resume May 14 in Las Vegas. Rescheduled shows were also to include dates in Portland, Oregon; Houston; Detroit; Atlanta; Washington; New York; Philadelphia and more. Live Nation had said tickets for previously announced dates would be honoured at rescheduled shows.

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Janet Jackson

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‘Every rape is not a ... hate crime,’ says judge

CELEBRITY COURT

Kesha’s claims of abuse as human rights violation thrown out

Kesha leaves Supreme Court in New York in this file photo from February. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pop star Kesha’s claims that producer Dr. Luke violated human rights and hate crime laws by drugging, sexually abusing and emotionally tormenting her were dismissed Wednesday, with a judge saying that rape isn’t necessarily an act of gender hatred.

Manhattan state Supreme Court Justice Shirley Werner Kornreich ruled in the platinum-selling singer’s civil-court clash with the hit-making producer, who denies the singer’s accusations and hasn’t been charged with any crime.

Kesha’s claims that Dr. Luke violated her rights by raping and abusing her can’t go forward because the alleged incidents happened outside New York, stretch beyond legal time limits and don’t meet the high legal bar for “intentional infliction of emotional distress,” the judge said.

“Her claims of insults about her value as an artist, her looks and her weight are insufficient to constitute extreme, outrageous conduct intolerable in a civilized society,” Kornreich wrote, adding that Kesha didn’t say that Dr. Luke’s alleged attacks were spurred by animus toward women.

“Every rape is not a gender-motivated hate crime,” the judge wrote.

Lawyers for the singer and Dr. Luke didn’t immediately respond to requests for comment on the ruling, which left standing a portion of Kesha’s claims involving contract issues.

Meanwhile, Kesha is appealing an earlier ruling rejecting a bid to be freed from her contract, Dr. Luke’s breach-of-contract claims against her are ongoing, and so are California and Tennessee lawsuits surrounding a dispute that has rippled through the entertainment business.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

INTERVIEW

Nyong’o channels her inner wolf for The Jungle Book

Lupita Nyong’o’s career has moved well along since her Academy Award two years ago, yet she’s still basking in the glow of her Oscar win.

“I never expected to win in the first place, so I didn’t have any expectations as to what life would look like after that, but I’m happy.

“I’m a really happy person. I love my life,” said Nyong’o at the world premiere of The Jungle Book this week in Los Angeles.

Nyong’o, who won best supporting actress in 2014 for 12 Years a Slave, currently stars in Broadway’s Eclipsed and is back on set for Star Wars: Episode VIII.

“I sleep whenever I can. I get massages and acupuncture and I eat well,” said Nyong’o of surviving her busy schedule.

“I plan what I eat a week in advance and then I don’t have to worry about it on a day-to-day basis.”

Nyong’o voices Raksha, Mowgli’s adoptive wolf mother in Jon Favreau’s live-action remake of The Jungle Book, which is in theatres on April 15.

“I channelled my own mother who is fierce and unwavering in her motherly ways,” she said of the role.

“I just think as a woman, I think we all have it somewhere in us and it was about finding it.”

“I channelled my own mother who is fierce and unwavering in her motherly ways.”
Lupita Nyong’o

Up next, she’ll reprise her role in the highly anticipated Episode VIII, but in true Star Wars fashion, Nyong’o remained tight-lipped about the project.

“It’s really cool,” she said of working with the franchise’s newest director, Rian Johnson.

“The adventure continues you know and it’s never a dull moment on that set.”

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An affordable alternative to a cottage

Parkbridge offers a unique model for cost-effective leisure

Many people dream of owning a cottage one day. Yet they may be held back by the notion that cottage ownership is unattainable for anyone without a large and steady income. Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities, however, is changing the equation with an affordable cottage-ownership model based on land leasing.

Land leasing is a form of home ownership that reduces the capital costs of buying a home. In the Parkbridge land-lease model, residents buy their home — owning it outright — but lease the land it's on from Parkbridge, making owning a cottage much more accessible. This lets vacationers avoid the need to come up with a huge down payment or get saddled with a massive mortgage, while putting them on a path to own the cottage of their dreams.

"By owning your cottage and leasing the land it is on, mortgages are much lower than with alternative options, freeing up money for the things that matter most," says Brad Dykeman, director of homes sales in Eastern Canada and land-lease expert for Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities Inc. "If you are trying to figure out how you will afford the vacation home you've always wanted, this is a great alternative to home ownership to consider."

Parkbridge has a history of developing affordable, comfortable and secure communities for vacation getaways. Its cottage and RV resorts include both cottages and chalets, park model homes and recreational-vehicle sites. Vacationers simply pay for the use of the land on a short-term or full-season contract — all without having to buy the lot. These recreational getaways offer a range of on-site amenities and social activities, and most of them are located on or near bodies of water and beaches, highly desirable in the sweltering summer months.

Parkbridge's land-leasing model lets vacationers own a cottage in a vibrant community where the everyday tasks of community maintenance are already taken care of. The major difference in a Parkbridge community is that there is no third party — the company takes care of managing the community and assisting its members with everyday needs. The result is a more relaxing and enjoyable vacation.

For more information on Parkbridge Lifestyle Communities, visit parkbridge.com.

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Colin Gillies and his wife, Sophia Jong, have added both a basement apartment and a third floor Airbnb suite to their Toronto home over the years to help cover their mortgage and other home-ownership expenses. CONTRIBUTED

Home buying the innovative way

REAL ESTATE

Ways to offset some of the costs of home ownership

Camilla Cornell

Colin Gillies has always regarded his house in the Dovercourt Road and College Street neighbourhood of Toronto as an asset that will pay for itself.

"When we moved in, our kids were nine and 13, and we needed more space," he said. But the house he and his wife bought had more room than they needed, so they added a basement apartment. That has helped cover the cost of their mortgage for the past 30 years.

When Gillies developed a rheumatic disorder that required him to quit work in 2011, he and his wife added a small kitchen to the spacious third story of their home and hung out their shingle on Airbnb. The extra $125 a night they earn has helped ensure they don't feel the pinch as much from having their income basically cut in half.

"Last year, we brought in about $27,000," said Gillies.

The bonus? "We've really enjoyed having conversations and spending time with the people," he said. "My health was such that we couldn't travel. This way, the world comes to our doorstep."

As Gillies can attest, getting — and keeping — a foothold on Toronto's property ladder sometimes requires a little inventiveness.

Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Team up with a friend or relative

A 2014 survey by TD Bank found a shift towards non-traditional ways of purchasing property. About four in 10 Canadians said they thought buying a property with friends or family members would be a great way to get started.

The scenarios vary, according to Collette Skelly, a real estate agent with Real Estate Homeward. She has dealt with several pairs of friends looking for three-bedroom houses in Toronto.

"They each take a room and they usually plan to rent the third bedroom to another friend," she said. In other cases, families seek a separate space in the house for an aging relative who is contributing cash to help them make the purchase.

But such agreements shouldn't be entered into lightly, says Pat Giles, associate vice-president, real estate secured lending at for TD-Canada Trust. Before embarking on such a venture, he advises, agree on a budget and down payment, as well as the key characteristics you want in a property, and what you're willing to compromise on.

In addition, most experts agree it's wise to write up a co-ownership agreement that stipulates who pays for what, and what happens if either party can no longer carry the mortgage, or one person wants out.

Launch an Airbnb

According to Aaron Zifkin, Airbnb's country manager for Canada, 82 per cent of the company's hosts around the world "share only the home in which they live, and 47 per cent say the income has helped them stay in their homes."

The downside, said Gillies: "I don't know if I would rely on Airbnb to top up a mortgage. Unlike having a tenant — nothing is guaranteed." But if you simply want to be less house poor than you otherwise would be, it's a great alternative, he said. And it's flexible. "If we have friends coming from out of town or we just want to take a break, we just update the calendar."

Take on a tenant

According to rentboard.ca, the average amount landlords get for a rental basement apartment in Toronto is $867 monthly.

"You may have to invest a bit more upfront for the house and the renovations," said Susan Asquith, a real estate agent with Bosley Real Estate, Ltd. in Toronto. "But in the long term, it should pay off."

When seeking a house with a rental space likely to attract good tenants, consider the ceiling height and windows. Said Asquith: "No one wants to live in the dark." If there's already a separate entrance, you'll save the $12,000-plus it would cost to dig one. And accessibility to shops, restaurants and public transit are selling points for potential tenants.

Host a student

Rates to house a foreign student in your home vary between about $500 and $800 a month, depending on the quality of the room, and whether you feed your student as well.

It's not chump change, said Skelly. And it can help new homeowners manage the cost of their mortgage. But hosts should be aware there's work involved. You're required to help students figure out how to get around the city and troubleshoot for them when necessary. And you must be tolerant of different habits and customs.

Want to learn more? Check out torontohomestay.org, canadianhomestayagency.com and homes-abroad-international.com, to name a few.

Opt for a 'transitional' neighbourhood

Investing in an up-and-coming area can allow you to get into the market and could well pay off big in the long run.

"Leslieville was once considered a transitional neighbourhood," said Skelly. "And the Junction used to be a disaster and all of a sudden it's the coolest place in town." Good bets now include the Pelham, Silverthorn and Stockyards areas in Toronto, she says.

MARKET VALUE

Bidding wars not for faint of heart

In spring 2014, Alyssa Richard and her fiancée began the intensive search to find what would be their first home as a married couple.

With an interest in Toronto's east side, they eventually found a property they liked in the Danforth-area. They submitted an offer. What they quickly found out, however, was that they were in the middle of a bidding war.

It wasn't an experience for the faint of heart, she said.

And she isn't alone.

From Riverdale to Roncesvalles, Forest Hill to Richmond Hill, and beyond; bidding wars are becoming increasingly the norm in Toronto's red-hot resale real estate market.

"Sitting in a fast-food restaurant and having to decide whether we were going to go up $10,000 or $20,000 within about a 20-minute span is very stressful," said Richard. "Everything moves very quickly."

Lauren Haw, a Toronto-based real estate broker, and director at Zoocasa, a real estate website that helps consumers search home listings, agrees with Richard. She said bidding wars can be a challenging ordeal, particularly for many first-time homebuyers.

"There's a lot of moving parts cycling through the system all at once, which can be overwhelming for a lot of people," said Haw. "My job, as a realtor, is to help slow all that down and bring some order to the process for my clients."

If advance preparation is the best antidote to feeling drained, both mentally and financially, Haw says clients should begin their real estate education by learning the difference between a home's list price and its market value.

As Haw explains, a home's listing price is frequently determined arbitrarily and is used as a marketing tool. A low list price, for example, is likely to help garner more interest — and likely — help to facilitate a bidding war among potential buyers.

By contrast, the home's market value is more objective and precise because it is based on very recent comparable sales in the area.

It's in the trendy and hip areas of Toronto where, she says, the gap between listing price and market value are often the greatest — places like High Park, Yonge-Eglinton and Roncesvalles, for example.

Another tip that Haw offers her clients is to not waste their time in the trenches if they have repeatedly come up short in multiple bidding wars in the same neighbourhood.

"If a homebuyer has lost eight or nine homes in close proximity to each other, I recommend that they expand their search to include a new area because maybe they aren't in the right market for what they can afford," Haw said.

Pat Giles, associate vice president, real estate secured lending at TD Canada Trust, recommends homebuyers do their own financial due diligence before getting emotionally attached to any specific property.

The first thing potential homebuyers should do, Giles said, is to get fully pre-approved for a mortgage.

"What we tell our clients is: don't confuse your budget with the mortgage you qualify for," he said. "The pre-approval acts as a strong safeguard from making too emotional of a decision [and biting off more than you can chew]".

"Being involved in [bidding wars] is a hard and fast education in the rules of real estate," added Mary-Anne Morkel, a sales representative with RE/MAX Rouge River Realty Ltd.

It's a truth that applies to Richard. Although she and her fiancée lost out in their first bidding war, the lessons they learned during that process later helped them secure their first home, which, ironically, also came in a bidding war. BRENT JOLLY

Being prepared is the key to surviving a bidding war. ISTOCK

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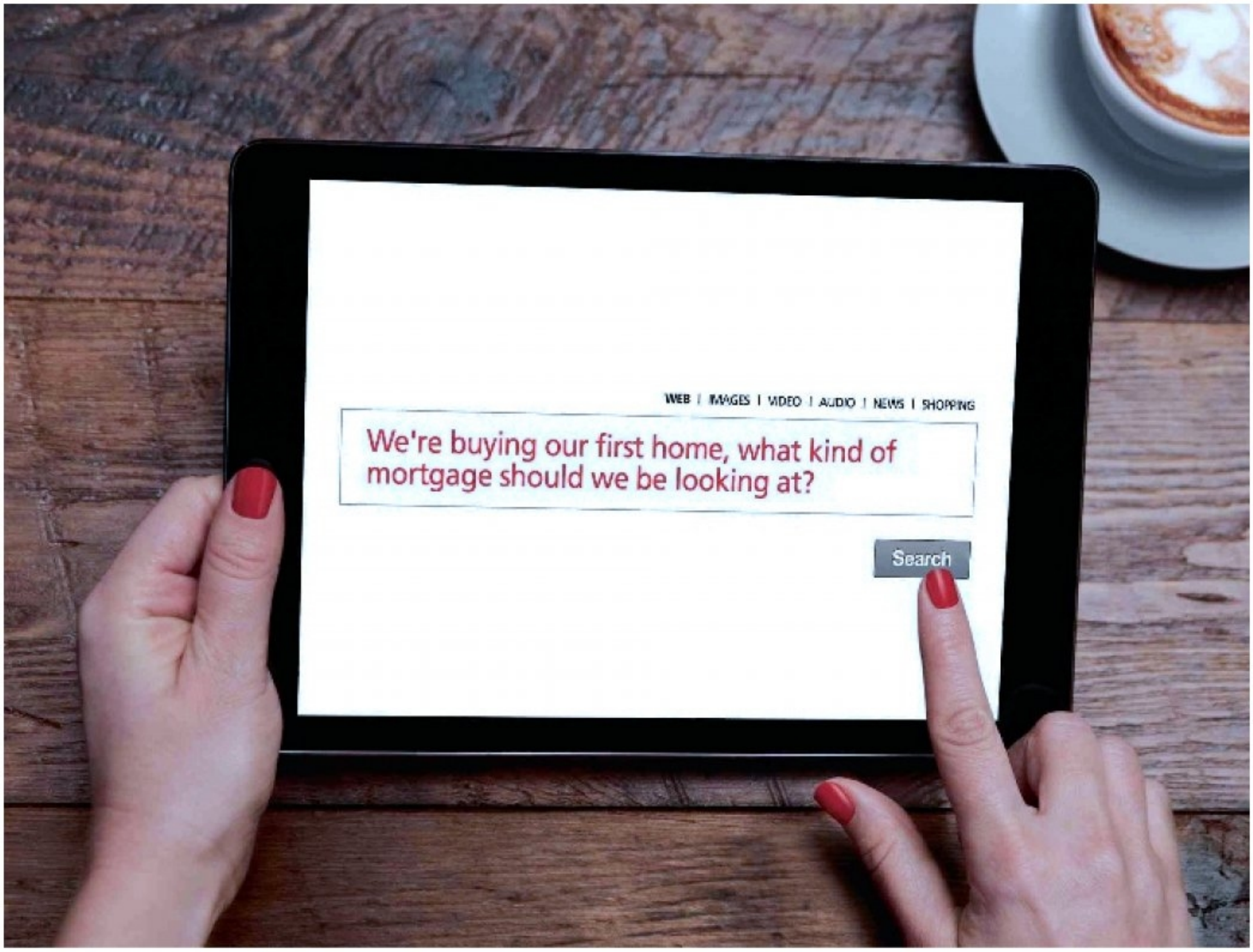

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Tech tools help in quest for new digs

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

The latest innovations to help you find property

Marc Saltzman

If you're like most Canadians looking to buy a home, you might circle a house for sale advertised in a newspaper, arrange to have an agent send listings in your desired area, or perhaps you'll browse properties online.

You might also consider adding some more advanced tech tools to your arsenal.

"Buyers are increasingly savvy, and they're discovering new and exciting ways to research a property and its community before seeing it in person," said Lahav Reznik, broker and managing partner of Forest Hill Real Estate Inc. Brokerage in the GTA.

"In conjunction with using a professional, these tools can provide a clearer overall picture of the property and its neighbourhood to help Canadians find their dream home."

In fact, many of these emerging technologies are Canadian-made.

Do the drone

Richard Foltys, founder of Woodbridge-based Richard Emmanuel Studios, says drone photography is becoming "extremely" popular among those who want a bird's eye view of a prospective property.

"We're getting more requests than ever from real estate agents and private sellers to shoot above and around larger properties," said Foltys.

"Homebuyers can get a great perspective of the property layout, an idea of how close they are to parks, walking distance to main streets, and the proximity of their neighbours," explained Foltys.

But these still images and videos need to be shot legally and responsibly, cautioned Foltys. Commercial drone photographers need to apply for a permit, but both drone photographers and hobbyists need to respect people's privacy and also not fly over anyone for safety reasons.

Foltys also uses a drone inside of a home as a virtual walkthrough.

"We can also provide an experience of what it's like walking through the house by taking the propellers off a drone and using the camera, with image stabilization, to shoot a smooth walk around inside," he said.

"It's almost like being there."

Virtual tours

Why settle for flat 2D images of a home you're interested in when you can take a virtual tour on a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop?

That's the idea behind VR Listing, Inc., a Toronto-based service that delivers virtual tours of homes for potential buyers. The company also operates in New York and Barbados, says Aaron Tench, the company's 25-year-old chief executive officer.

VR LISTINGS INC.

"With VR Listing, agents can show their clients 10 houses in 10 minutes — with life-like realism and feel — without needing to leave their own home, saving both time and money," explained Tench. "We aim to change the way real estate is marketed globally and allow people to view properties from other countries."

A serial entrepreneur with a history in the tech start-up space, Tench says he and his partner, Jon James Atyeo, were monitoring the Canadian real estate sector and discovered the solutions for marketing properties were simply outdated.

The process begins with a multi-point scan of the interior of the property. A sophisticated scanning camera utilizes both high-definition optics and calibrated lasers to digitally map out the interior of a space. Several image points are collected, and this information is digitally assembled to create a 3D rendering of the space. Using the information, a visual floor plan is created, along with a second schematic floor plan (with exact measurements of room sizes). The "dollhouse" feature, which zooms the viewer outside of the property, gives a 3D perspective that can be easily manipulated to view at any angle. Pricing starts at $250.

Deep-dive data

Toronto-based Hometrics is looking to be a disruptor in the real estate space by rating, ranking and analyzing every home.

Specifically, hometrics.ca provides information on a neighbourhood not easily found elsewhere, be it crime statistics on the street, number of residential complaints, building permit information, quality of local schools, and more.

HOMETRICS

Starting at $5, Hometrics says it breaks down multiple variables into easy-to-read reports. Most users opt for the full $99 report, which includes all seven segments for neighbourhood, street and property intelligence.

David Silverberg, Hometrics co-founder, says this proprietary "big data" technology can analyze and rank more than 500,000 residences in Toronto in just a few clicks.

"It's a very powerful system."

Richard Emmanuel Studios drone photography. RICHARD FOLTYS

Will your soon-to-be home be fraught with problems?

PROTECT YOUR INVESTMENT

Eager buyers who waive a home inspection to close a deal do so at their peril

ALEX SCHULDTZ

Brent Jolly

From leaky roofs and wet basements to plumbing problems and faulty foundations, Alan Carson has seen the entire spectrum of defects and damage that can haunt a home during his nearly 40 years in the home inspection business.

"I've never seen a perfect house," said Carson, president of Carson Dunlop, a Toronto-based home inspection consulting firm he co-founded in 1978. "Every good home inspection looks at several hundred components, so it's not just a quick cosmetic review."

Key areas that require reviewing in every inspection, Carson says, include the home's structure, the furnace and air conditioning, the plumbing, roofing, insulation and ventilation. And that's just the start.

"Home inspections help consumers understand what they're getting into and how to help them protect their investment," said Carson.

But with bidding wars becoming even more commonplace in Toronto's sizzling market, more and more new homebuyers are choosing to forego a home inspection because it offers a chance to get a leg up on landing what they believe to be their perfect property.

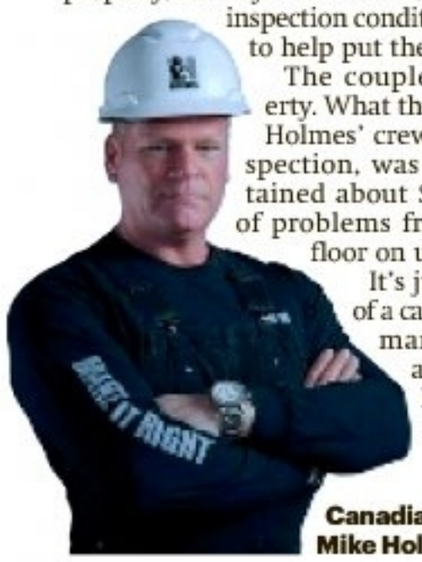
Although it's one way to help quickly close a deal, it's a strategy bound to backfire over the long-term, says Canadian contractor Mike Holmes.

"It's by far the biggest mistake 'boom buyers' can make," said Holmes. "Buying by illusion, rather than education, means consumers are likely to walk into a world of pain."

About a year and a half ago, Holmes and his crew were hired by a young Toronto-area couple, who had recently purchased a home near High Park. With multiple offers on the table for the property, the buyers decided to waive the home inspection condition in their offer to help put them over the top.

The couple got the property. What they also got, after Holmes' crew did its own inspection, was a list that contained about $150,000 worth of problems from the ground floor on up.

It's just one example of a cautionary tale that many homebuyers are learning the hard way, Holmes says.



Canadian contractor Mike Holmes CONTRIBUTED

One of the best tips Holmes offers consumers preparing to put themselves in the crosshairs of a real-estate bidding war is for them to do their homework — earlier, rather than later.

To start, he says consumers should ask home inspectors lots of questions before hiring them. Clients should know how long an inspector has been performing home inspections and what they were doing professionally before inspecting homes.

The best home inspectors, Holmes says, often have previous experience in construction, contracting or the trades. It's an important fact to consider because Ontario does not yet have a formal licensing program in place for home inspectors.

Mark Weisleder, a Toronto real estate lawyer, recommends consumers take the time to be present when they get a home inspection done. It's a good idea, he says, because they can ask their inspector to explain potential problems to them on site, in language they can understand.

Another safeguard Weisleder recommends for homebuyers is to get to know as much about a home and its neighbourhood before making any offers.

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BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

Renovate strategically

When it comes time to renovate a home, be smart about which fixer-upper projects you undertake.

Some updates will add extra value to a property come listing day, but others might fail to offer a return on investment.

"When you're doing renovations, a lot of the time they're for yourself and your own enjoyment, but that doesn't necessarily translate into something that's good for resale," said Brendan Powell, a Toronto realtor with the Brel Team.

"Yes bathrooms and kitchens are always where you get the biggest bang for your buck, but you don't always get more than you spend. Ask yourself, is it just an ugly kitchen or is it a complete disaster? You have to look at the house as a totality. If you're going to put in a brand new kitchen but the rest of the house looks like a disaster, you can't just do the kitchen. It's a slippery slope. Sometimes it's best to leave ugly things be. There's no point doing a lipstick makeover."

Mississauga homeowner Sharon Giraud, 49, recently began prepping her property for resale, to be listed this month. Giraud and her husband will be experiencing what it's like to live in other parts of the world, beginning with Malaysia.

"Our home-reno plans started a couple of years ago because we knew our exit date from Canada," she said. "We did things with that in mind."

The couple hopes to fetch top dollar for the house they've lived in for 16 years to help fund the next chapter of their lives as semi-retired, global-trotting renters.

The touch-ups are minor, with the goal of accenting a unique property tailored to professionals instead of families, as it features home offices, low-maintenance gardens, modern bathroom fixtures, and plenty of space for entertaining friends, including a pool.

Small improvements can work wonders toward making a good first impression, says professional Toronto-based stager and interior decorator Red Barrinuevo, of Redesign4more.

"Fix the scratches and leaky faucets, the cracked tiles and the grout issues," Barrinuevo advised.

"Those things make a big difference. You don't want to be handing your to-do list to the new owners. They can always go somewhere else with nothing to do."

Sometimes the biggest payoffs are fast and cheap.

"Painting is almost always worth it," said Powell. "Paint is cheap, easy and quick…"

For yards in need of a makeover, bring in inexpensive mulch for a clean look.

"Make it as easy as possible for people to see what the space is," said Powell.

"De-clutter so that the rooms look big and they can see past the stuff." TANYA ENBERG

Creating additional usable living space can help home sellers harness top dollar. ISTOCK

New build perks push boundaries

AMENITIES

Developers meet innovative demands of homebuyers

Jaclyn Tersigni

Technology is constantly pushing the boundaries of what's possible, and consumers expect the best. In response, developers are pulling out all the stops to win prospective homebuyers. Houses and condos are more innovative than ever, incorporating new technologies, amenities and upgrades for easier, "greener" and more connected lifestyles.

Going green

Imagine a home that creates more energy than it uses — and saves you hundreds of dollars on your utility bill. Minto Group Inc. has built that green dream, called a Net Zero Energy Ready home, in its Arcadia development in Kanata, Ont. Billed as one of the country's most energy efficient homes, the "Killarney" is a 2,406-square-foot, three-bedroom house that blends technology with innovative design and materials to reduce home energy consumption by a whopping 65 per cent.

Its heating system is twice as efficient as a natural gas furnace, advanced insulation and triple pane windows help the house retain warmth. Its energy monitoring system helps the homeowner monitor their energy use.

The most impressive part of the home is its roof, which can accommodate solar panels to produce as much energy as the home is expected to consume in a 12-month period.

The home is open for public viewing while Minto constructs four townhomes with similar energy targets in the Arcadia community, to be sold upon completion. Arcadia is being used as a test site for future Net Zero Energy developments in other communities. The Killarney model starts at $452,900.

minto.com

Fancy amenities

Developers of new condominiums are getting creative when it comes to amenities. A new 38-storey residential building by Capital Developments and Freed Developments at 150 Redpath Ave. in Toronto will boast a 24-hour in-house diner to serve both residents and passersby. Residents can order room service, as well as have food brought up to one of the building's other attractive features — a rooftop pool and deck.

redpathcondos.com

With 25,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenities, Lighthouse Tower by Daniels Corporation — a 45-storey condo to be built at Queens Quay East and Lower Jarvis Street, overlooking Toronto's waterfront — will have the typical fitness facilities and party spaces, but also promises some fairly unique bonuses. Sophisticated home cooks and kitchen beginners alike can take advantage of the Kitchen Library, a space stocked with shared appliances for use, as well as cooking seminars and training. The Jam Studio will have gear and space for musicians of all levels to practise and play, while the Arts and Crafts Studio will provide opportunities for artists to create, learn and enjoy exhibits, programmed by Artscape.

danielswaterfrontcondos.ca

Big sound

FutureDreamHome, an annual feature at the National Home Show, showcases the best of design, architecture and innovative technologies in a model home for attendees to be inspired by. This year's installation — designed and constructed by Michael Upshall of Probuilt Design and Build company and Darren Sanger-Smith of residential design firm Structured Creations — featured North America's first ever installation of a completely invisible, state-of-the-art surround sound system.

In the home's recreational room, audio designer Keith Vanderkley used a series of speakers from Dolby, Amina Technologies and Triad Speakers to create rich sound that seems to emanate from all angles. The speakers are entirely invisible, hidden from sight behind the screen and in the ceilings. Listeners feel as though they are in the centre of the sound; background conversations in a movie scene sound as though they're happening behind you and a rain shower sounds as though it's coming from above.

Keith Vanderkley designed a completely invisible surround sound system. CONTRIBUTED

TRIPLE BUILT

Great Gulf Homes builds its new residential properties three times using its H+ME Technology. First, the home is built in virtual 3D. Once all components are tested and the 3D rendering is approved, each panel, wall and even the roof is precision-engineered at a 200,000 square foot manufacturing facility. The home is then assembled on-site, often in as little as two days' time. *greatgulf.com*

Olivia Marie Gardens

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Located at the northeast corner of Mississauga Rd. and Olivia Marie Rd., Daniels' Olivia Marie Gardens Community is the best place to put down roots in this highly coveted Brampton location.

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Time to spring into staging your home

OPEN HOUSE

As you prep and primp your home to sell, here are a few accessories to freshen up your space. The best part is, you can take all these fab new finds with you to decorate your next dwelling.

Lisa Evans

Drape a colourful throw
An artfully arranged blanket can cover an unfortunate blemish on the couch or simply add a chic dash of colour to a neutral room. Cambie Yellow & White Blanket, $100, available at 1535A Queen St. W., Toronto, visit cambiedesign.com.

Add some greenery
Send the knick knacks packing, but highlight an empty spot, on a coffee or side table, with an arty flowerpot, like this concrete gem. Marbled Icosahedron Geometric Planter by Double L Decor, $20, available at Gifted, 181 Park St., Waterloo and ReChic Studio & Design, 1148 Queen St., New Dundee, visit doubleldecor.ca.

Set the table with style
You don't have to pull out the good china and silverware, but perhaps dress up the dining table a little bit with a stylish tablecloth and a vase of fresh, in-season blooms. Garden Gate Tablecloth by Samantha Pynn for Simons Maison, starting at $24, available at Simons stores, visit simons.ca.

Toss a playful cushion (or two!) on the couch
Throw cushions are a great way to add some colour and style to a tired sofa or to your favourite, well-worn, comfy armchair. Pink Peony Stripe Pillow Cover, $39.50, available at Chapters and Indigo stores, visit indigo.ca

Add a little ambiance to your outdoor decor
Is your patio table set up on the back deck? Help a new buyer picture summer fiestas with a few carefully placed items, like these lanterns (don't forget to add a tea light).
Blue glass lanterns by PC Home, $12 to $16, available at Loblaw banner stores across Canada.

Brighten your bedroom with colourful bedding
Deflated duvet? Fluff up your tired set and accent pillows with cheerful new covers, like these ones designed by Sarah Richardson. Pomegranate Ribbon Stripe Ensemble (sheets, duvet and Euro sham sets, and accent pillow), US$200, visit sarahrichardsondesign.com.

Showcase new life in your home

For today's buyer, the 'appeal' factor goes far beyond the curb. WEST BLUE MEDIA

Give buyers the chance to imagine living there, says Toronto luxury stager Anne Bourne. JONATHAN NICHOLLS

REVAMPED HOME

Stage your space to turn it into someone's dream home

Tanya Enberg

Carefully curated furnishings, lovely accent pillows, masterful lighting and clever pops of colour can shift a tired-looking space into a dream home for potential buyers while bringing in top dollar for sellers.

Calling in home stagers and their styling tricks to work their magic before listing is becoming the norm — a trend blooming, in part, from the around-the-clock rotation of reality-style home reno shows, each one culminating with the big reveal of a completely revamped, drool-worthy property.

"In the past few years staging has taken off like wildfire," said Toronto luxury stager Anne Bourne of StagingWorks.

"We've gotten $80,000 over list price and even more importantly, they're selling in a day. It's hard to know if it's the staging or the market, but I have to think the staging definitely has an impact."

Gone are the days when simply scrubbing the interior, cutting the lawn, and plopping a few pretty plants on the porch will do before pitching the 'for sale' sign.

For today's buyer, the 'appeal' factor goes far beyond the curb.

Enter the home stager to amp up the photo-ready treatment.

The goal of staging is to give buyers the chance to experience a space in a way that allows them to imagine living there.

It is about maximizing small rooms, reworking awkward spaces, choosing great art, lighting, accessories and furniture size strategically. While that may sound easy enough, in reality it can take an expert eye. Essentially, the images homeowners ogle in magazines often don't carry over into their own living quarters, say the pros.

Home stager and interior decorator Red Barrinuevo can make any space, from a 600-square-foot downtown condo to 6,000 square-foot house, pop.

"Every square foot counts," Barrinuevo said.

"Everything needs to showcase as much space as it can for homebuyers. They need to know exactly what they're going to do with the space and how they are going to do the layout with their furniture. When you walk into a house that's not staged and not de-cluttered, it's a challenge for most buyers. They think, 'How will my couch fit here?'"

Common rules for staging include removing TVs and replacing them with art and storing all personal items and mementos.

"No. 1, remove all of the little bits of clutter that we all have," advised Bourne.

"The stacks of paper, the tiny paper weights beside the lamp, any little knickknack things people tend to collect all should be gone. I'd rather see nothing on end tables than a lot of little things. Just stick one vase on your coffee table or three great coffee table books. Keep it simple. The whole idea is to let people envision themselves in the house. People want to see the space, where they're going to cook or bake or whatever it is they do, but nobody wants to know what shampoo you're using."

THE PRICE FOR THE PROS

- A consultation of a condo of less than 1,000-square-feet will cost about $200-$300 and take up to three hours.
- The stager will advise on furniture placement and art, lighting and best accessories to showcase.
- Staging a 700-square-foot condo typically costs between $2,500 and $3000.
- A consultation of a mid-sized home will cost about $300-$350.
- Staging an occupied 3,000-square-foot home is about $2000-$2,500 on average.
- Staging a vacant property can run $4,500 and up.

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metro HOME

Your essential daily news

San Fran man builds box in friend's place to get around high rents

Will towns rule the town?

Stationwest townhomes by Adi Development Group is located adjacent to the Aldershot GO station. ADI DEVELOPMENT GROUP

CONDO TRENDS

Brokerage predicts more moves into townhomes

Duncan McAllister
For Metro Canada

As we've noted before in this space, the price gap between GTA condominium apartments and fully-detached homes is widening, making it difficult for first-time buyers to get into the market.

Once again, TheRedPin.com online brokerage has crunched the numbers and surmised that certain market changes will likely lead townhouses to emerge as the de facto single-family home of the future.

Married couples and young families looking to move on up, have conventionally made the transition from a condo to a single-family home. But TheRedPin.com found that last year, with the price differential on average coming in at a formidable $427,232, made the move an improbable task for many millenials.

In a new trend, stacked condominium townhouses are serving the need for an alternative to pricier freehold residences. There are drawbacks, however — close-quarters living space, nearby neighbours, and a smaller pool of inventory to choose from. Nevertheless, it may well be worth the investment, says TheRedPin.com co-founder Rokham Fard. "It's a different lifestyle, it's a little bit of a compromise, but again it's the next step up, if you want to be on a trajectory of positive growth."

The company uses computer models developed in-house to analyze Toronto real estate data.

"Our research is based on all the transactions in the GTA. We look at everything — there's no bias. We don't have a preference for certain areas or certain housing types. We literally just report on the data, trying to find a hidden insight in those numbers." says Fard.

A recent new townhouse development is Stationwest, part of a new 762-home, master-planned community in Burlington. These smart, contemporary, open-concept urban towns by Adi Development Group and designed by ICON Architects, are located right next to the Aldershot GO rail station.

The units will consist of conventional and back-to-back townhomes with features typically reserved for custom homes, from aluminum and frosted glass garage doors to oversized windows and framed glass balconies.

Each townhome will include a spacious rooftop terrace or back yard.

And in Toronto's east end, SweetLife Condos will include 18 three-storey condo towns in addition to a six-storey tower. The units feature spacious and well-appointed layouts built by Your Home Developments.

Located in Toronto's West Hill, the building offers great convenience, being minutes from the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus and Centennial College.

Residents will also be a few minutes from Highway 401, TTC public transportation and the Guildwood and Rouge Hill GO rail stations.

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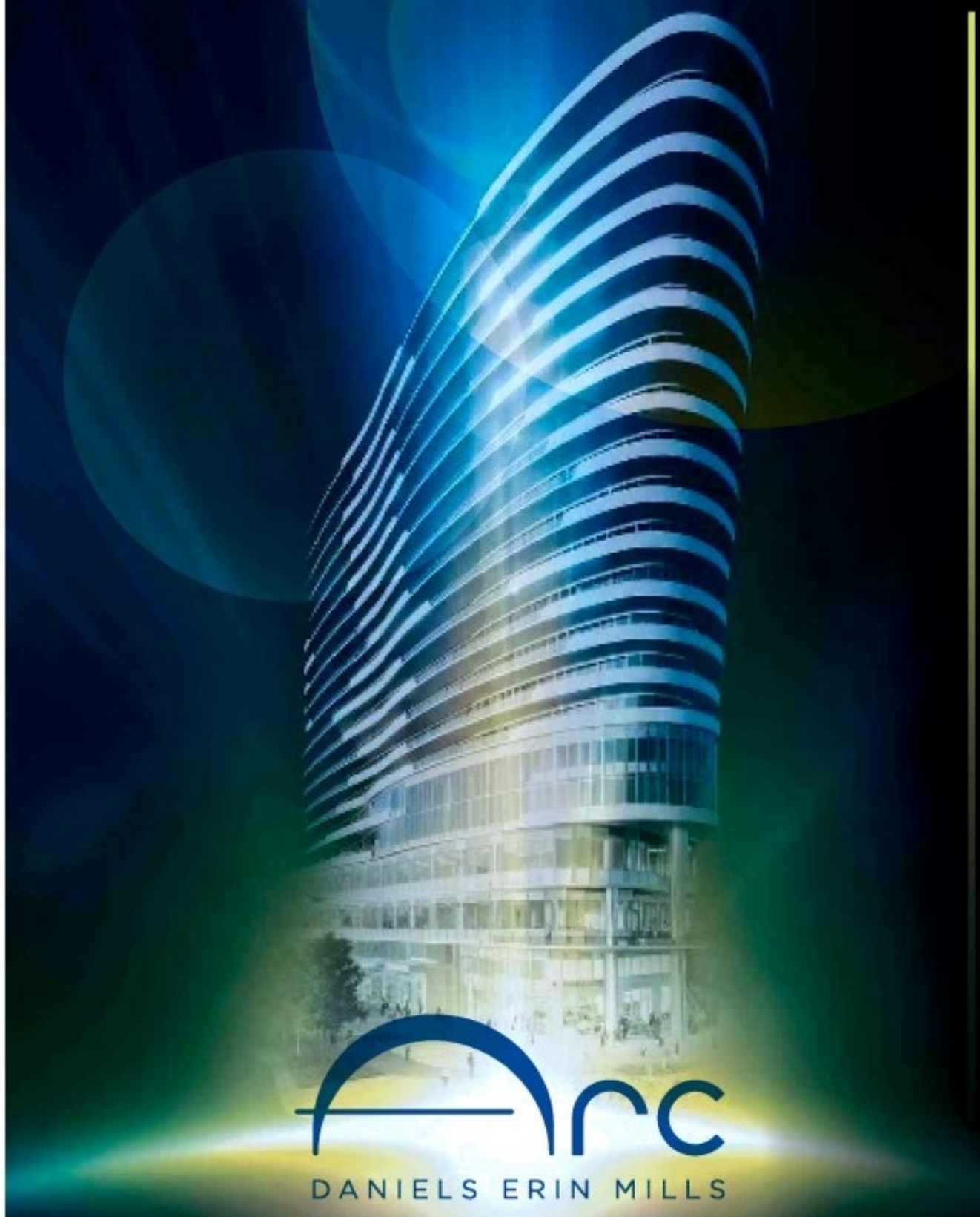
OF ERIN MILLS



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MEET THE CONDO

A condo project that's super Sonic

Project overview

Billed as the future perfect condo, Sonic will enjoy a pioneering location nearby the Eglinton Crosstown LRT in the geographic heart of the GTA. Most suites have generous balconies and will offer spectacular cityscape views.

Location and transit

Sonic is located across from the future Science Centre Station, part of the Eglinton Crosstown LRT line. And motorists are adjacent to the Don Valley Parkway, allowing ease of access to downtown or throughout the entire GTA.

Housing amenities

Sonic condominiums will have more than 25,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor amenity spaces. The highlight may be a large landscaped outdoor park designed by the NAK Design Group, which includes a figure eight-shaped walking path.

In the neighbourhood

Already with a walk score of 75 per cent, most trips to the major Real Canadian Superstore, the multiple retail options at The Shops of Don Mills, or even The Science Centre, can be done on foot.

DUNCAN MCALLISTER/FOR METRO

CONTRIBUTED

NEED TO KNOW

What: Sonic condominiums
Builder: Lindvest
Architect: Page + Steele/IBI Group Architects
Interiors: U31 Inc.
Location: Eglinton Avenue and Don Mills Road
Building: A 28-storey tower atop a three-storey podium with 320 suites.
Sizes: From 339 to 941 square feet.
Pricing: From the low-$200,000s
Suites: Studio, one bedroom, one bedroom plus den, two bedroom and three bedroom
Status: Pre-construction
Occupancy: Slated for 2019
Sales centre: 18 Ferrand Dr., just south of Eglinton
Hours: By appointment
Phone: 416-532-6636
Website: lindvest.com/sonic

REAL ESTATE

What's hot on the market

DUNCAN MCALLISTER

1 NOW REGISTERING

Yonge and Eglinton: Live at Yonge and Eglinton at Whitehaus Condominiums located at 2360 Yonge St. in Toronto's midtown. Register online and be first on the list for pre-construction pricing.

CONTACT: 647-344-1520, WHITEHAUS.CA

2 OPEN HOUSE

Waterfront: Here's a large one-bedroom and den with two full bathrooms being shown at Pier 27 Condos right on the waterfront. Check it out at 29 Queens Quay Ave. E. on April 9 and 10 from 1 to 4 p.m.

CONTACT: ANDREW IPEKIAN, 416-572-1016

3 NOW REGISTERING

Vaughan: Oggi boutique townhomes are coming soon to the city of Vaughan at Highway 7 and Kipling. Register online for pre-construction pricing and more information.

CONTACT: OGGITOWNS.COM

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LEGAL MATTERS

Storefront repairs owner's responsibility

Jeffrey Cowan
For Metro Canada

Q: I own a commercial storefront building in town that I am selling.

The closing date is scheduled for tomorrow and I have heard from my lawyer that the purchaser is refusing to close because the city has issued a work order requiring the repair of the brick work on the front of the building.

I need the funds tomorrow in order to assist in the purchase of another building and now I am facing undue delay or even cancellation of the transaction.

What are my options in this instance?

A: Unfortunately, the responsibility for the building rests with the owner until such time as the property is transferred.

You are accountable to the City and the new owner for repairs to the façade of the storefront.

However, you may still be able to close if your lawyer can negotiate a holdback of some of the funds in order to address the repairs.

This will require some quick work on your part sourcing out someone who can give you are reasonable estimate with respect to the repairs.

If you and the buyer can agree on a sum then the purchaser's lawyer will hold the money in their trust account in order to pay for the repairs and you can proceed to transfer the property as scheduled.

Last minute repairs to a property you are selling can be tricky and costly.

Repairs, such as to brickwork on a facade, rest with the owner until the property is officially transferred. ISTOCK

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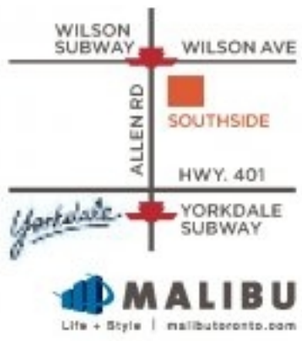

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Housing in the budget

Bryan Tuckey
For Metro Canada

The federal government's recent budget included funding for public transit and affordable housing and that's good news for the GTA

Canada's government plans to invest $3.4 billion in public transit across the nation over the next three years and Ontario will get the largest share at about $1.5 billion. Our industry has long-advocated for all levels of government to invest in public transit. Everyone benefits from it and we all have a responsibility to help pay for it.

For decades there has been under investment in new infrastructure, especially public transit, by government. Not only does the GTA need more as its population continues to grow, but it also needs to replace and retrofit aging assets that have been neglected for so long.

Hopefully the federal government's commitment to share in the capital cost of transit will be used to reduce price pressures on new residential development and new homebuyers.

More and more it has fallen to new homebuyers to contribute disproportionately to the cost of new infrastructure, including transit.

Ever-increasing development charges and other government fees and taxes have been applied to the cost of development to the point where government fees and charges make up about one-fifth of the price of new homes in the GTA.

Another piece of good news in the recent federal budget was funding for affordable housing. The federal government pledged $2.3 billion toward affordable housing construction and renovation and other programs tackling homelessness in Canada over the next two years.

Ontario will get a portion of that funding, and if applied appropriately, it will go toward initiatives that can assist our industry in building more affordable housing in the GTA.

With this new funding, governments must create clearly defined programs and explain how to access them. As a partner in building more affordable housing, the development industry needs to understand so we can help to get more homes constructed.

> **More and more it has fallen to new homebuyers to contribute disproportionately to the cost of new infrastructure.**

Federal funding to help address affordable housing and public infrastructure issues is a good first step. To be effective, it will require collaboration from every sector so that municipalities, home builders and providers can invest the funding into shovel-worthy projects that help people and create jobs in the GTA.

BRYAN TUCKEY IS PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE BUILDING INDUSTRY AND LAND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION AND A LAND-USE PLANNER WHO HAS WORKED FOR MUNICIPAL, REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS. FOLLOW HIM ON TWITTER @BILDGTA, FACEBOOK.COM/BILDGTA, AND BILDBLOGS.CA.

5 EASY WAYS TO SPRUCE UP FOR SPRING

There may still be a chill in the air but these quick and affordable decorating ideas will warm you up to the joy of spring. Freshen up your home with these five easy, inexpensive tips. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

1 Show off a collection

Vintage glassware such as **old soda bottles, demijohns and jars** looks great grouped together on a shelf or tabletop. They add a little sparkle to your space and reflect light. Spring is a great time to scour antique markets and yard sales for those vintage treasures.

2 Bring the outside in

Cut branches from **forsythia, dogwood and other branches** that bloom in spring are a great way to bring the garden inside. Cut branches off bushes in your garden or head to your local floral shop and purchase some branches that haven't bloomed. Place them in a vase with water and watch them bloom.

3 Simple flowers

Who can resist the buckets of blooms outside floral shops in the spring? Buy a bunch or two and fill your house with fresh bouquets. After all, nothing says spring like flowers.

Tips to help keep flowers looking fresh:

- Remove foliage from the stem that will sit below the water line.
- Trim stems under water so they absorb moisture.
- Add a teaspoon of sugar to water.

4 Organize your entryway

Pack away the winter clutter in your entry to make space for spring. An **entry table provides a spot to set down mail** but is small enough in size to limit clutter. A vase with simple green foliage and colourful art welcomes guests. A pretty dish provides a spot for keys.

5 Add colours and patterns

Swap out old throw pillows and heavy winter throws for something fresh and new. Accessories such as **throw pillows and blankets** are an easy way to change your space, adding colour, pattern and texture.

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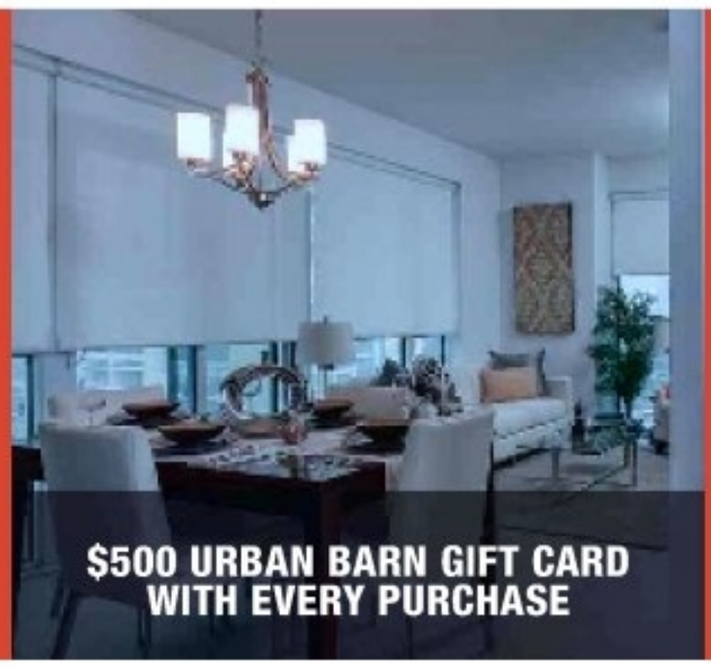

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EMPIRE RAIN & SENSES

metro SPORTS

With two more home runs Wednesday, Robinson Cano became the first Seattle player to hit four homers in the first three games of the season

Rays sting Jays late

MLB

Souza's two homers help Tampa earn series split

Steven Souza Jr.'s first multi-homer game helped the Tampa Bay Rays to a second straight late come-from-behind victory.

Souza's second home run of the game, a go-ahead, three-run drive in the eighth inning, lifted the Rays over the Toronto Blue Jays 5-3 Wednesday.

Erasmo Ramirez (1-0) allowed one hit over the final two innings as the Rays split the four-game series after losing the first two.

"Just to even it up with those guys over there was so big for us," Souza said. "It's a great team over there. Obviously a playoff team and one of the best in the American League."

Souza pulled Tampa Bay to 3-2 in the sixth with a solo homer off J.A. Happ. Tampa Bay has homered in a team-record 18 consecutive games dating to Sept. 20.

"I'm just staying within myself," Souza said. "Letting the ball take its course."

Evan Longoria and Desmond Jennings singled off Gavin Floyd (0-1) in the eighth, and Arnold Leon relieved with one out. Souza homered to centre for his fourth hit of the game, tying his career high.

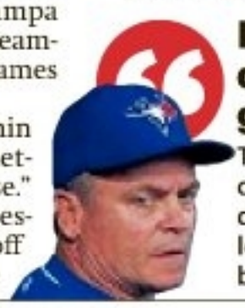
Josh Donaldson hit a three-run homer in the third off Matt Moore. The reigning AL MVP left after a seventh-inning at-bat with a strained right calf.

"The calf just sort of locked up," Donaldson said. "I tried to go three or four innings with it. It was just one of those situations where one, I didn't think I was quite able to play defence the way I wanted to, and two, if I had to try and run, it was pretty difficult. But I don't think it's too serious and, hopefully, I'll be back for our next game."

Moore gave up three runs, five hits and two walks in five innings with six strikeouts. Happ allowed two runs and seven hits in six-plus innings.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Steven Souza Jr. of the Rays hits a three-run home run off Blue Jays reliever Arnold Leon on Wednesday in St. Petersburg, Fla. CHRIS O'MEARA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



55 It doesn't offend my mother, my daughter, my wife, who have a great understanding of life.

Toronto manager John Gibbons defended his comment that "maybe we'll come out wearing dresses tomorrow," which he made after the Jays lost 3-2 to the Rays on Tuesday night because of baseball's new rule on breaking up double plays.

NHL

Leafs' loss to Jackets boosts lottery odds

The Toronto Maple Leafs helped their chances of winning the upcoming draft lottery by falling to the Columbus Blue Jackets on Wednesday night.

The Leafs can finish no higher than 29th place overall after dropping a 5-1 decision to the Blue Jackets in their final home game of the season. Now solely alone in last place after an Edmonton win against Vancouver, Toronto will have either the best odds of landing the No. 1 overall pick (20 per cent) or the second-best odds (13.5 per cent).

The Leafs, who have two games remaining, can still finish with more points than the Oilers, though a tie would see Edmonton finish higher.

Brandon Saad, Brandon Dubinsky, with two, Oliver Bjorkstrand and Matt Calvert scored for Columbus.

Morgan Rielly found the back of the net for Toronto.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

WEDNESDAY At ACC

5	1
JACKETS	LEAFS

EDMONTON THE END OF AN ERA FOR REXALL PLACE
A fan shows his support as he watches the final game at Rexall Place between the Oilers and Canucks in Edmonton on Wednesday. The Oilers closed out the building in style with a 6-2 win. JASON FRANSON/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Cup fever could be dissipating

NHL

Survey shows playoffs are trending away from must-see

Cam Tucker
Metro | Vancouver

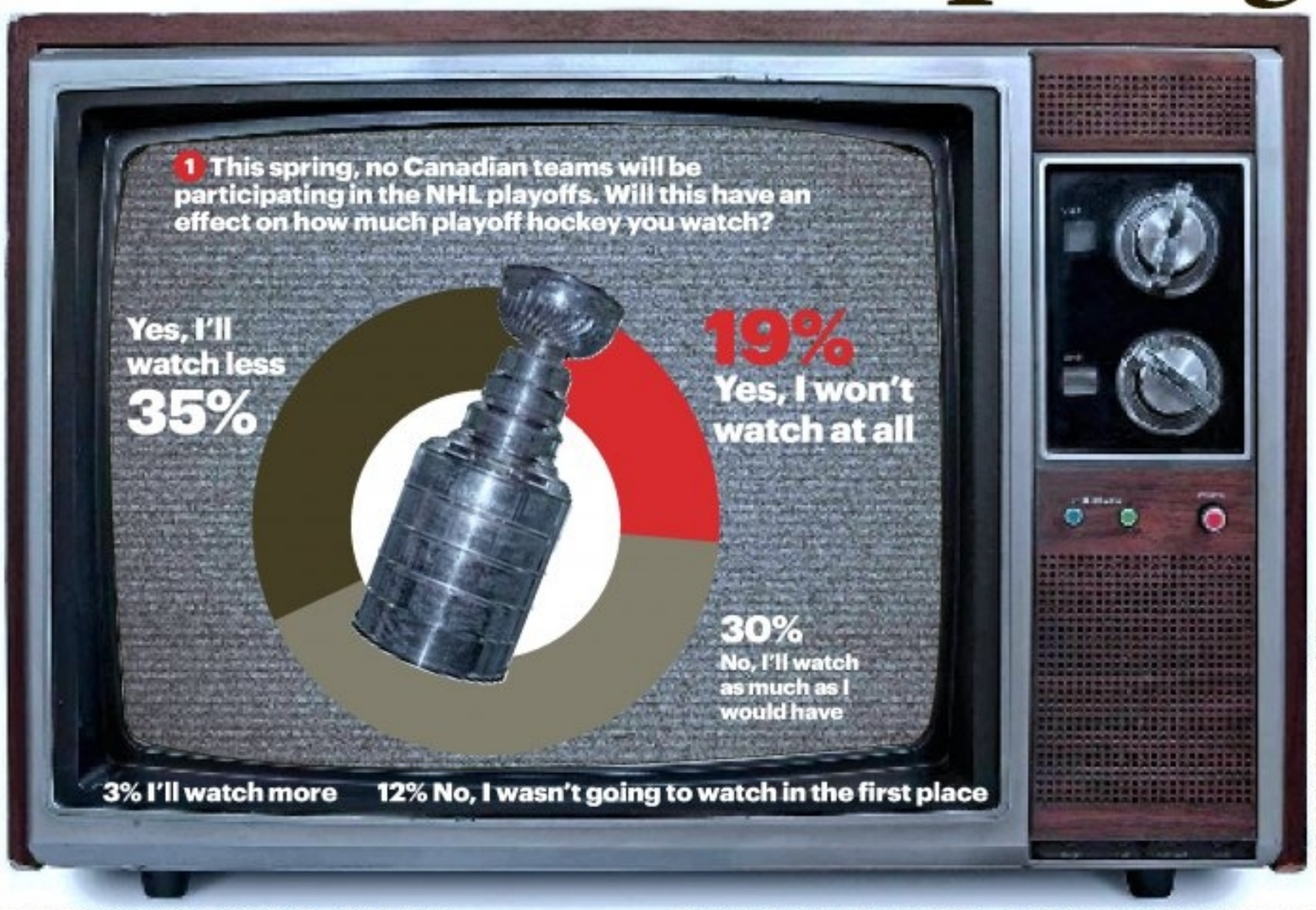
For the first time since 1970, Canada's NHL teams have been entirely shut out from the Stanley Cup playoffs, which could throw a heavy hit on viewership north of the border, a new Angus Reid Institute survey suggests.

The absence of Canadian teams means 54 per cent of fans who would usually watch the NHL post-season say they will either watch less playoff hockey this year or won't even watch at all, according to the online survey of 1,522 Canadians conducted from March 28 to 31.

Last week, the Ottawa Senators were the final Canadian team to be mathematically eliminated from contention, ensuring that for a 23rd consecutive year a Canadian team will not win the Stanley Cup.

For most Canadian teams, specifically Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg and Toronto, the stretch drive has been less about playoffs and more about dropping to the bottom of the standings for the best chance at landing the first overall pick in the 2016 NHL Draft.

According to the survey, not having a Canadian team in the playoffs could have a substantial impact on the number of "diehard fans" who choose to tune in.



GRAPHIC BY ANDRES PLANA/METRO

Of the 131 people who identified as "diehard fans," 47 per cent said they would watch less playoffs this year. Twelve per cent said they won't watch at all.

"I think that just goes to show how closely diehard hockey fans in this country identify this as Canada's game," Shachi Kurl, executive director for the ARI, told Metro.

Still, almost 200 Canadian players will compete for the Stanley Cup on playoff teams this spring. The Florida Panthers, and the St. Louis Blues lead the way each with 16 Canadian players on their rosters.

The survey states that 46 per cent of respondents said they will support the Chicago Blackhawks, the defending champs, in the Western Conference. Twenty-six per cent said they would support the Boston Bruins (if they make it) in the East, and 25 per cent said they'd go for Sidney Crosby and the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"Even though we know that there are going to be certain hometown heroes … this is really about local pride and about Canadian pride," said Kurl.

The Montreal Canadiens were the last Canadian team to hoist hockey's coveted silver chalice back in 1993.

The Habs are, in the minds of fans, the favourites to reclaim hockey supremacy, with 26 per cent of respondents saying they would be the next Canadian team to win the Stanley Cup.

Not everyone shares that sense of optimism. Three per cent of respondents say no Canadian team will ever win the Stanley Cup again.

IN BRIEF

Wolfsburg shock Madrid

Wolfsburg caused the biggest upset of this season's Champions League with a 2-0 victory over record 10-time winner Real Madrid in the first leg of their quarter-final on Wednesday.

Making only its second appearance in the competition and playing its first quarter-final, Wolfsburg outmuscled and outran the Spanish giant to give itself a clear chance of advancing after next Tuesday's second leg at the Bernabeu.

Cristiano Ronaldo
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pacers cruise past Cavs

Paul George scored 29 points and C.J. Miles added 21, helping the Indiana Pacers blow out the Cleveland Cavaliers — with LeBron James getting the night off — 123-109 on Wednesday night.

Indiana ended a four-game losing streak in the series and still leads eighth-place Detroit by a half-game. Ninth-place Chicago, still vying for one of the final two playoff spots in the East, is now three games behind the Pacers.

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RECIPE Black Bean & Tuna Wrap

PHOTO: MAYA VISNYEI

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

This protein-packed wrap makes an easy, healthy dinner.

Ready in
Prep time: 30 minutes
Total time: 35 minutes

Ingredients
- 1 x 19 oz. can of black beans, drained
- 1 x 5 oz. can of tuna
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh tomato
- 1/2 cup chopped red pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red onion
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 3 Tbsps lime juice
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 2 handfuls of chopped lettuce, washed and dried well
- 1/2 an avocado, sliced
- 4 tortilla wraps

Directions

1. In a large bowl, toss together beans, tuna, onions, peppers, oil, lime juice and salt and pepper. Cover and place in the fridge for half an hour or overnight for the flavours to combine and develop.

2. When you're ready to assemble your wraps take your bowl out of the fridge, add your chopped cilantro and stir.

3. Lay your tortillas out on your work surface.

4. Place your lettuce down first (this will keep your tortilla from getting soggy), then scoop the tuna on top, and add a few slices of avocado. Make a rectangle of filling in the middle of your wrap. Pull one side of your wrap over the filling and tuck it in snugly. Now fold over both ends of the wrap. Keep rolling it over until it's closed. Slice in half and serve.

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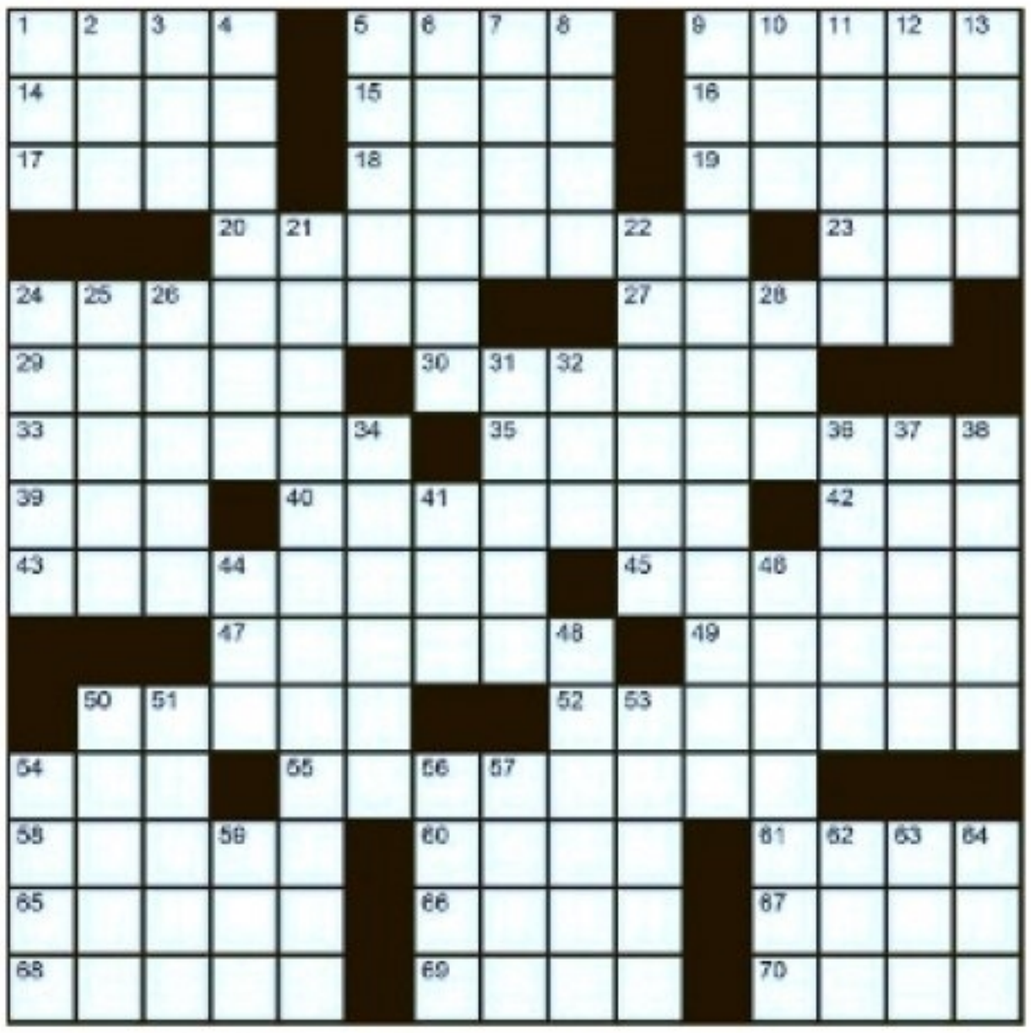
CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN



ACROSS
1. Wooden wedge
5. Sea lettuce
9. "What am I, chopped _?"
14. Verdi opera
15. Sci. class
16. Dispatch boat
17. Ringing reverberation
18. Mini medians
19. Biker role in #61-Across
20. 11:00pm, for instance: 2 wds.
23. Social pages word
24. Fab Four, for one
27. Canada _ (CBC's annual books competition)
29. Regular
30. Woodstock salutes
33. Of the body's major artery
35. Rules of conduct
39. Shiba _ (Dog breed of Japan)
40. Pamplona's locale in northern Spain
42. Muesli tidbit
43. Drop in rank
45. Sacred place
47. Gilligan's boat, S.S. _
49. Ancient Greek colony
50. Joe of "JFK" (1991)
52. The _ (Novel by #9-Down which is the 2016 winner of #27-Across)
54. Abitibi article
55. 1934: Montreal Neurological Institute founder, Dr. Wilder _ (b.1891 - d.1976)
58. Express
60. Sports car, _ Romeo
61. "_ Rider" (1969)
65. Latin for 'I believe'
66. Enter: 2 wds.
67. _ & The Bunnymen
68. Russian ballet company
69. Hobbyist's purchases
70. Actor, Oliver _

DOWN
1. Maple's meal
2. "Speed it up, stallion!"
3. US 'Gem State', briefly
4. Shopping centre regular's nickname
5. Decrease
6. It keeps a censor ready with the bleep button: 2 wds.
7. Van _, Vincent
8. Besides
9. Newmarket, Ontario born author (More at #27-Across and #52-Across): 2 wds.
10. Climber of the quoins
11. Choice dish
12. Rob of "90210"
13. Automatic
21. Nfld., for one: 2 wds.
22. Cheering-on people
24. Randy of "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz" (1974)
25. "Can you give _ _ moment, please?" (Making-a-decision couple's request)
26. Latin for 'gold'
28. Peer Gynt's mother
31. Actors Joe or Vincent
32. Odd, briefly
34. Ms. Kazan of "My Big Fat Greek Wedding 2" (2016)
36. Fist, in France
37. Actress Ms. Raymonde
38. Bargain
41. "_ Ryan's Express" (1965) starring Frank Sinatra
44. Mantric syllables
46. Antlered creature of European woodlands: 2 wds.
48. Nintendo's getting-in-shape offering, _ _ Plus
50. Science dish
51. 'Poly' add-on (Synthetic fabric)
53. Angles
54. Good fortune
56. Harps
57. Sight-of-ice in The Arctic
59. Japan's capital's old name
62. Expert
63. "_-Devil" (1989)
64. Greeted, Rocky-style

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Today the only New Moon in your sign all year is taking place. That's why this is the best day to take a realistic look in the mirror to see how you can improve your image.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
A hidden epiphany or a sudden idea likely will occur to you today. Listen to what it is, because it might help you.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
This is the only New Moon all year regarding friendships for you. Are you happy with your friendships? Do your friends care about your welfare? Think about this.

Cancer June 22 - July 23
This is perhaps the best day of the year to think about your life direction. Are you headed in the direction you want to go? Are your goals really your goals?

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
What further training can you get to improve your job? What further travel and education might enrich your life? Think about this today.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Today's New Moon urges you to study your debt and anything that has to do with shared property. Figure out what you owe and what you own, because information is power.

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Today is the only New Moon that is opposite your sign all year. This means it's the best day of the year to think how you can improve your partnerships and close friendships.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Today's New Moon is an opportunity to think about how you can be more efficient at work. It's also the perfect time to think about how you can improve your health.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
How well do you balance play and work in your life? It's crazy to work so hard that you never enjoy life. "What's it all about, Alfie?"

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
The New Moon today is your chance to make resolutions about how to improve your home, as well as how to improve your relationship with family members. Ideas?

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Communication with others is important because we are social creatures. Do you listen as well as speak? How can you be a better communicator?

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Today's New Moon encourages you to think about how you handle your money and your possessions. What kind of report card would you give yourself?

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9

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			9		7			
9		8				6		3
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1	7	3	5	6	9	2	8	4
4	3	8	1	9	5	6	2	7
2	9	6	3	7	8	1	4	5
7	5	1	6	2	4	9	3	8
3	1	4	2	5	6	8	7	9
5	8	2	9	4	7	3	6	1
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